

DETERMINISM IN CALVIN

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## INTRODUCTION

With the revival of Calvinism in some of the new theological movements of Germany, - notably that of Barth, - and with the continued devotion to the great principles of the Calvinistic teaching on the part of such an able French scholar as Doumergue, it seems only fitting that British and American students should become more familiar with the Calvinistic system of thought as it is put forth by Calvin himself; especially since Calvinism has had such a profound influence upon the past history and development of the English-speaking world and has in these latter days become so little known, save through the extremely wholesale criticism of its opponents.

In the minds of a great many people 'Calvinism' is synonymous with 'intolerance'; and some, having heard of the burning of Servetus, consider themselves most upright in "saying all manner of evil" against any idea which could have come from 'so base a wretch' as John Calvin.

It is really not necessary, however, to go into the question of the burning of Servetus, in order to consider the merits of the Calvinistic theology, - and indeed most of those who use this incident as the sole and sufficient ground for the rejection of Calvinism have not gone into it. It cannot be denied that when one has made due allowance for Calvin's attempt to mitigate the punishment of Servetus by endeavoring to alter the mode of his death,<sup>1)</sup> there still remains the evidence that it was on the instigation of Calvin that he was arrested, and that Calvin concurred in his death, if he is not actually responsible for securing it in the face of opposition.<sup>2)</sup> But what is there in the admission of all this to cause us to conclude that Calvin's theological system is necessarily false and definitely unchristian? There is still to be considered the whole question of the punishment of heresy, together with the merits of this particular case; and in addition, this case must be studied in the light of the generally accepted view of religious toleration amongst both Romanists and Protestants of the day. The argument for religious toleration is not so simple as many of its advocates suppose; and even if one grants that all the ardent

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 1) See The Letters of John Calvin, edited by Jules Bonnet, vol. 2, Letter 329.

2) Ibid., Letters 153, 154, 320, 322, 324, 325.

religious enthusiasts of the 16th century were mistaken on this point, Calvin amongst them, this does not at all show that the Calvinistic teaching on other matters is equally fallacious. One must not forget that perhaps the first protagonist for the punishment of heresy was Plato,<sup>1)</sup> and that his grounds for advocating it were exactly those of Calvin, - namely, that the truth of the orthodox position could be proved, and that the dissemination of heretical views was as destructive to the life of the soul as would be the spreading of poison to that of the body. Moreover, there is much to be said for this common contention, and surprisingly little in the way of rational argument with which to oppose it. Yet, even if one disagreed with Plato on this matter, it would scarcely be considered wise to disregard the whole Platonic philosophy simply on that account. It is hardly the part of wisdom to maintain that unless every proposition in a man's philosophical or theological system is right then the whole system is necessarily wrong; for to reason in this way would be to discard probably all philosophies, and to destroy among the rest, that of the contender himself, - since few, if any of us, can claim to be above

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1) The Laws, Bk. 10.



religious enthusiasts of the 16th century were mistaken on this point, Calvin amongst them, this does not at all show that the Calvinistic teaching on other matters is equally fallacious. One must not forget that perhaps the first protagonist for the punishment of heresy was Plato,<sup>1)</sup> and that his grounds for advocating it were exactly those of Calvin, - namely, that the truth of the orthodox position could be proved, and that the dissemination of heretical views was as destructive to the life of the soul as would be the spreading of poison to that of the body. Moreover, there is much to be said for this common contention, and surprisingly little in the way of rational argument with which to oppose it. Yet, even if one disagreed with Plato on this matter, it would scarcely be considered wise to disregard the whole Platonic philosophy simply on that account. It is hardly the part of wisdom to maintain that unless every proposition in a man's philosophical or theological system is right then the whole system is necessarily wrong; for to reason in this way would be to discard probably all philosophies, and to destroy among the rest, that of the contender himself, - since few, if any of us, can claim to be above

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all mistakes.

It may seem quite ridiculous, but it is nevertheless a fact that there are those who try to account for the distinctive features of Calvin's thought on the ground of his being a dyspeptic. But surely, to contend so without first showing these distinctive features to be false, is worse than a waste of time as far as discrediting them is concerned. If the connection between Calvin's dyspepsia and his argument can be proved, and yet the argument itself cannot be answered, the pointing out of this connection does not in any way refute the Calvinistic position. On the other hand, if the argument can be proved false on logical grounds, then the establishing of this connection, while a very interesting historical observation, is wholly unnecessary from the standpoint of the refutation of the Calvinistic theology. But those who advance this contention, do so in order to cast disfavor upon the tenets of Calvinism without taking the trouble of directly rebutting them, <sup>1)</sup> -

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 1) It may indeed seem preposterous that an argument such as the one supposed should be advanced. But the astounding fact is that it is advanced in some American universities by otherwise very clever instructors, and that it is accepted as the obituary notice of Calvinism by a great many students, whose sole conception of the truth and falsity of arguments is so mixed up with a vague notion of Freudian complexes that they consider



which is surely, not only a most unscholarly procedure, but scarcely an honest one.

If Calvin believed in Predestination (it is always this doctrine which is opposed as the distinctive tenet of Calvinism) because he was a dyspeptic, why did Augustine believe in the same doctrine? And why was it also held by Aquinas,<sup>1)</sup> and by both Luther<sup>2)</sup> and Melanchthon?<sup>3)</sup> Surely no one could accuse the Angelic Schoolman, the robust and jocular Doctor Martin, and the benign Melanchthon of having dyspepsia. And

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anybody necessarily mistaken who holds views which they themselves would not like to hold.

- 1) See Bohjannes' "Compendium of the Summa Theologica of St. Thomas Aquinas - Pars Prima", chs. 22, 23, 82, and 83 (though it must be admitted that Aquinas' doctrine is scarcely that of Calvin).
- 2) See Martin Luther, "Bondage of the Will" (The Rev. Henry Cole's translation, London, 1823), especially pp. 108, 109, 374, 375. Here Luther contends: "I have shown before, that Free-will cannot be applied to anyone but to God only." (pp. 108f.) And again, in conclusion, he affirms: "I consider that I have now abundantly satisfied the godly man, who wishes to believe the truth without making resistance. For if we believe it to be true, that God fore-knows and fore-ordains all things; that he can be neither deceived nor hindered in his prescience and predestination; and that nothing can take place but according to his will, (which reason herself is compelled to confess;) then, even according to the testimony of reason herself, there can be no Free-will - in man, - in angel, - or in any creature!" (pp. 374f.)
- 3) See Melanchthon's "Locis Communes" (Plitt-Kolde edition, Leipzig and Erlangen, 1925), pp. 67, 75, 80. Melanchthon here declares: "Quandoquidem omnia quae eveniunt, necessario iuxta divinam praedestinationem eveniunt, nulla est voluntatis nostrae libertas. Paulus ad Ro. XI (v. 36): ---; ad Ephe. I (v. 11): ---; Mat. X (v. 29): ---. Obsecro, quid hac sententia clarius dici potuit?" (p. 67)

can it be shown that Jonathan Edwards and all the other later Predestinarians have been dyspeptics? If not, then it is just possible that Calvin might have had the same reasons for believing in Predestination which these men had. One might ask: if it has really been observed that all dyspeptics have a tendency to believe in Predestination, and that Predestinarians are often dyspeptics; and if not, what reason there is to suppose that dyspepsia contributes in any way to the acceptance of this doctrine.

According to the late Professor James Ward,

"It is --- generally allowed that in the long theological controversies, which for centuries have raged round our problem, logic has been on the side of those who, like Augustine, Aquinas, Calvin and Edwards, have maintained the doctrine of divine predestination."<sup>1</sup>)

And since Prof. Ward was not himself an advocate of Predestination, this admission should have some weight. But our Calvinistic discreditors are not at all troubled about logic. Their idea of a further refutation of the doctrine of Predestination would be to try to discover something wrong with the health of Augustine, Aquinas, and Edwards, or perhaps of Prof. Ward. It would scarcely occur to them to investigate the logical grounds of the doctrine itself.

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<sup>1</sup>) James Ward, Realm of Ends, p.308.

But surely the influence of Calvinism upon the religious, moral, political, social, and economic life of men has been sufficient to warrant a more careful study of Calvin's teaching than this; and it is just possible that there is sufficient indebtedness on the part of English speaking peoples to obligate them to be at least fair in their consideration of Calvin's views. With Bungener,

"we shall protest against the strange eagerness with which, at the present day, he is abandoned, or denied by so many whom simple justice, not to say **gratitude**, should range among his friends. Between the apotheosis, which we want for none, and an abandonment so ready and complete, there is room at least for a serious study, worthy of the cause and of the man."<sup>1)</sup>

Calvinism did a great deal for the world in a time when it sadly needed a great deal to be done for it. It revived a Pauline conception of God, and of man's relation to Him, which filled the hearts of its believers with a high seriousness. Calvinists may have had many faults, but a lack of regard for God and a lack of zeal for righteousness were not among them; and a renewed interest in God and righteousness might  
2)  
not be amiss in our own day.

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- 1) Felix Bungener, "Calvin: His Life, His Labours, and His Writings" (English translation, 1863), p.5.
- 2) It does appear that, as Professor Bavinck has said, "History has demonstrated that the belief in election, provided it be genuine, that is, a heartfelt conviction of faith, does not produce careless or Godless men." ("Calvin and the Reformation", p.127.)



It is passing strange that there should be such a high regard for Determinism in science today, and such a low regard for Predestination in theology. <sup>1)</sup>

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1) As Prof. Kuijper says, "If you now proceed to the decree of God, what else does God's fore-ordination mean, than the certainty that the existence and course of all things, i.e. of the entire cosmos, instead of being a plaything of caprice and chance, obeys law and order, and that there exists a firm will which carries out its designs both in nature and in history." (Calvinism, p. 148.)

"It is a fact that the more thorough development of science in our age has almost unanimously decided in favor of Calvinism with regard to the antithesis between the unity and stability of God's decree, which Calvinism professes, and the superficiality and looseness, which the Arminians preferred." (Op. cit., p. 149.)

"Through evil report and good report Calvinism has firmly maintained its confession. It has not allowed itself to be deprived by scoff and scorn of the firm conviction, that our entire life must be under the sway of unity, solidity and order, established by God himself." (Op. cit., p. 152.)

It is indeed more than strange that men who firmly believe in the unchangeable and absolute laws of Nature, should yet ridicule the doctrine of Predestination. Do they consider themselves outside Nature? Many of them are likewise prone to ridicule all idea of a Super-nature. They confine God to Nature, and insist that He must obey her laws. According to them miracles are an impossibility - for God. If one knew all the laws of Nature, he could tell exactly what God would do; for God can do nothing new. But we can. We can do the unexpected, the unforeseen. Not even God, who must know all the laws of Nature, can tell what we shall do. For we have real freedom - within limits. Nature limits our possibilities, but it does not close us up to one unchanging course, as it does God.

But such a view seems highly questionable. And if it is a mere matter of personal preference, one might be excused for preferring not to be the one unstable and seemingly irrational element in an otherwise rational and ordered universe.

For surely, if Determinism is to be the rule in science and philosophy, we cannot do without some form of Predestination in theology, - if we are to have any theology at all.<sup>1)</sup>

It is scarcely true to say that the doctrine of Predestination is the distinguishing feature of Calvinism; since it has been a component part of several systems of theology. The distinguishing features of Calvinism in this sense, are its view of the sacraments and its church polity. And yet, the doctrine of Predestination is more fundamental to the Calvinistic system than either of these; and it is only through a consideration of it and its allied doctrines that one can discover Calvinism's affiliations and philosophical consequences, because it is only through these

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 1) According to Reyburn, "Modern science did not appear above the horizon till generations after he (Calvin) had vanished from the stage of history, and after predestination had been everywhere spoken against. But one of the leading doctrines of modern science is just predestination in a new guise. If Calvin speaks of those who are doomed to perdition and of those who are chosen to salvation, science speaks of the millions of immature lives both of plants and of animals which are doomed to be destroyed that the remainder may survive and perpetuate the type." (Hugh Y. Reyburn's "John Calvin - His Life, Letters, and Work", p. 369.)

doctrines that one comes to the Calvinistic conception of God, which is the proper beginning and the true heart of Calvinism.<sup>1)</sup> Consequently, it is to this most opposed part of Calvin's teaching that we shall direct our attention.

The thesis of this paper is that Calvinism is an illogical form of Determinism, which errs, - contrary to the accusations of most of its opponents, - not through being deterministic, but through not being deterministic enough.

By Determinism I mean a system of thought which considers the universe as all of a piece, each part causally related to every other part, and the whole merely an inevitable unfolding in time of an eternally fixed scheme. Of course the Determinism in Calvin is theistic, since the deterministic elements in his system all center around his cardinal doctrine of the Sovereignty of God.

We shall have no concern with that great body of Calvin's teaching which relates to such matters as the Trinity, the Person of Christ, the Sacraments, etc.;

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 1)Reyburn remarks:"Calvin's doctrine of predestination is not set forth as a primary doctrine of his theology. It appears as a logical development of his original principles. But it is the thread which binds the separate items of his teaching into a unity. It determines all he has to say on the character of God, on the condition and destiny of man and on the work of the Redeemer and of the Holy Spirit."(Op.cit.,p.364.)



since this has little or no bearing upon our subject. But we shall investigate Calvin's treatment of the doctrines of Creation and Providence, Total Depravity, Irresistible Grace, Perseverance, Justification, Prayer and Good Works, the Church and the State; because it is in these that we shall be most apt to discover the Calvinistic teaching with regard to the question of human freedom, and the bearing of that teaching upon the practical affairs of human life.

The Institutes will be our chief source, because it is only in them that we have the system as a whole set forth, and because they are not only the background of his other writings, but in the last edition represent Calvin's most mature views on our subject.<sup>1)</sup>

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 1) See Calvin's "Institutes of the Christian Religion" (Allen's translation, London, 1813.), Preface (p.19), where Calvin explains that the Institutes are the proper background for the understanding of his Commentaries.  
 His treatise "De Libero Arbitrio" was written in 1543 in reply to what he considered to be an attack by Pighius of Campania on an early edition of the Institutes. (See Corpus Reformatorum, v.34, cc.233, 234) In connection with Pighius' question as to whether the idea of God's ordaining all things does not do away with all incentive to activity on our part, he remarks: "Si exspectat Pighius, dum novam responsionem excudam, fallitur: sed tantum ex Institutione mea mutuabor, quod solutioni satis sit." (c.256.) In 1552 he published a further reply to Pighius' attacks, entitled "De Aeterna Dei Praedestinatione", in which he says: "Quid nos sentiamus, satis locuples, ut nihil praeterea addam, testis est Institutio." (Corpus Ref., v.36, c.260.) Later in the same treatise he says: "Now, though I believe I have, in my 'Institutes', already refuted,

We shall divide our study into four Parts:

First, a consideration of the deterministic doctrines of Calvinism; Second, a consideration of the consequences of this teaching in other doctrines; Third, a criticism of this teaching; and Fourth, the development of it.

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with clearness and brevity, the various absurdities of opposition which my adversaries heap upon my doctrine,--- yet, as Pighius has found much delight in nibbling at my testimonies and my replies to opponents; I will not object to wash off from myself, as I proceed, his virulent soil." (Cole's translation, entitled "Calvin's Calvinism", v.1, pp.116f.)

In a dissertation on Providence, appended to this treatise, he affirms: "Nudis tantum verbis quae uberius in mea Institutione exposita fuerant nunc referam." (Corpus Ref., v.36, c.347. Cole's translation, op.cit., v.2, p.3.)

In 1557, he published another, briefer treatise on Predestination, and in 1558, a refutation of certain calumnies of his doctrine of Providence. But the last edition of the Institutes, in 1559, may be taken as the best statement of Calvin's whole position.

Prof. Doumergue in the Introduction to the 4th volume of his great work, "Jean Calvin", (p.1) remarks: "L'Institution chretienne, c'est tout Calvin et tout le calvinisme. Nisard écrivait il y a déjà longtemps: ' L'Institution ---, c'est à la fois le système religieux de Calvin, sa conduite et son portrait.' Plus récemment et plus énergiquement Brunetière a répété: ' L'Institution chretienne, à elle seule, c'est presque Calvin tout entier.--- Homo unius libri! Pour connaître Calvin on n'a besoin que de l'Institution chretienne.' Tout cela est vrai, non sans quelque exagération. Pour connaître vraiment tout Calvin, pensée, caractère, personnalité, il faut consulter non pas une source, mais trois: son Institution, ses Sermons et ses Lettres." (D.Nisard, Histoire de la littérature française, I, 1844, p.301. F.Brunetière, L'oeuvre littéraire de Calvin, dans la Revue des Deux-Mondes, 15 octobre 1900, p.920, 921.)

However, since we are not so much concerned with Calvin's character and personality, we need not trouble so much about his letters and sermons.

## Part I.

THE DETERMINISTIC TEACHING OF CALVIN.

## Chapter I.

## CREATION and PROVIDENCE

The Doctrine of Creation and Its Deterministic Implications

The Calvinistic view of creation is simply that of the first chapter of Genesis.<sup>1)</sup> In the beginning GOD made the heavens and the earth by the word of His power in the space of six days. For Calvin

"Moses was an authentic witness and herald of the one God, the Creator of the world",

and the first chapter of Genesis exhibits not the mere essence only of God, but also

"his eternal Wisdom and his Spirit",<sup>2)</sup>

in that the progressive creation displays His providence and paternal solicitude towards man by evincing the fact that

"before he would make man, he prepared every thing which he foresaw would be useful or beneficial to him." <sup>3)</sup>

He could have made the world in a single moment of time; He chose to do otherwise, seemingly for the purpose of giving man the opportunity of contemplating

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1) Institutes, Book I., chs. 14, 15.

2) Ibid., p. 152 (Bk. I., ch. 14, par. 2).

3) Ibid., p. 169 (Ch. 14, par. 22).

at a later date the orderly and progressive advance of the creative movements. For in spite of what Calvin has to say on the subject, if God had chosen to make the whole thing at once, the stage would have been as well set for man as it was through a six day process, since man would have preceded in neither case the things necessary for his existence. The only thing here of importance is that God is a purposive being, since

He "has demonstrated, by the very order of creation, that he made all things for the sake of man."<sup>1)</sup>

God is therefore an intelligent being, the Supreme Intelligence, from whose image the soul of man is made,<sup>2)</sup> which is the seat of man's intelligence.<sup>3)</sup>

But the soul of man is in no sense an emanation from the substance of God, as the Manichaeans held; nor can creation be the mere forming of preexistent matter into a cosmos; for as Calvin maintains,

"Creation is not a transfusion, but an origination of existence from nothing."<sup>4)</sup>

Creation is ex nihilo and teleological. In the beginning there was only God.

But now this doctrine of Creation, which it may be justly remarked is not peculiar to Calvinism

1) Op.cit., p.169 (Ch.14, par.22). - See also "Calvin's  
2) Ibid., pp.173ff. (Ch.15, par.3.) Calvinism", Part 2,  
3) " p.172. (par.2.) pp.27,47.  
4) " p.177. (par.5.)



as such, but is the generally accepted view of all orthodox Christians, is certainly deterministic. If God created all things for His own glory, the things themselves had nothing to say about it. They did not even exist until God called them into being, so their existence can in no sense be an expression of their own wills. And their nature is determined, not by themselves, but by the purpose of God. Consequently, even though man be the height of the creation as far as the earth is concerned, he did not choose this position for himself, but was placed in it by God. And the purpose of man's existence, which is the factor that would determine his nature according to Calvinism, is hid in the secret will of the Creator.

The Problem of Evil in connection with the Doctrine of Creation.

But if God endowed everything in the world with its original nature, we are immediately confronted with the problem which was ever a thorn in the flesh of Calvinism, and which we shall find constantly before us in our study of the Calvinistic theology: namely, How came evil into the world?. Its presence here is something Calvin would be the last to deny. On the

other hand, he will not admit that in its character as evil it is something for whose existence God is responsible; for this he feels would make God evil, - which for Calvin is unthinkable. God is wholly good and is perfection itself. How, then, does it happen that His world is at least partially evil?

### 1. The Devil.

Of course Manichaeism is an easy answer to the question. But from Calvin's standpoint it is unsatisfactory. God alone is eternally and independently existent, and the Devil himself is one of His creatures. How then comes the Devil to be evil; for Calvin admits that

"he is naturally depraved, vicious, malignant, and mischievous" and "that he is the author, conductor, and principal contriver of all wickedness and iniquity"<sup>1)</sup>

But Calvin denies that anything in the universe is  
 2)  
 evil in its original nature. According to him,

"Since the devil was created by God, --- this wickedness which we attribute to his nature is not from creation, but from corruption. For whatever evil quality he has, he has acquired by his defection and fall. And of this the Scripture apprizes us; lest, believing him to have come from

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 1) Institutes, Bk. I., ch. 14, par. 15.

2) Ibid., par. 3.



God, just as he now is, we should ascribe to God himself that which is in direct opposition to him." 1)

But Calvin would not allow us to think that the Devil was in any sense free from God. He declares:

"The discord and contention, which we say Satan maintains against God, ought to be understood in a manner consistent with a firm persuasion, that he can do nothing without God's will and consent. --- Satan is subject to the power of God, and so governed by his control, that he is compelled to render obedience to him. Now, when we say that Satan resists God, and that his works are contrary to the works of God, we at the same time assert that his repugnance and contention depend on the Divine permission. I speak now, not of the will or the endeavour, but only of the effect. For the devil, being naturally wicked, has not the least inclination towards obedience to the Divine will, but is wholly bent on insolence and rebellion. It therefore arises from himself and his wickedness, that he opposes God with all his desires and purposes. This depravity stimulates him to attempt those things which he thinks the most opposed to God. But since God holds him tied and bound with the bridle of his power, he executes only those things which are divinely permitted; and thus, whether he will or not, he obeys his Creator, being constrained to fulfil any service to which he impels him." 2)

Similarly, according to Calvin, God controls and directs all evil spirits. They can do nothing in actual

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1)Op.cit.,par.16.

2)Ibid.,par.17. It must be noticed that Calvin here speaks as if the Devil's inclination to evil were something not determined by God, but something which God has to counteract and direct. It is the language of Pluralism, and the figure is that of a king ruling his subjects. But this figure is scarcely strong enough to do justice to the relation of Creator and creature,

opposition to His will.

We shall comment in a later chapter upon the consistency of this general position. The point to note here is that even though Calvin places all the responsibility for the evil character of the Devil upon the Devil himself, he is yet much concerned to maintain the continued sovereignty of God, and to deny to the Devil any real freedom from God's direction and power. The Devil may think he is opposing God; he does evil because he desires to do it, since it is evil. But in every act he is fulfilling the purposes of God.

But now, when Calvin speaks about the Devil being 'compelled to render obedience to God', it is not certain whether he means conscious obedience or not. Obedience, strictly speaking, is a conscious activity; and being so, one whose inclination was to oppose God, could only be compelled to obey Him by the recognition

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and its use indicates a confusion in Calvin's mind with regard to the exact relation between God and the Devil. In "De Libero Arbitrio" (p.35) Calvin similarly contends: "Dicimus, non caeco aut fortuito casu sursum deorsum versari res humanas, sed certo Dei consilio administrari: ut nihil accidere possit quam quod decrevit ab initio: omnia eius potestati subiecta esse: idcirco nullam esse creaturam, quae non eius voluntati, aut sponte, aut coacta, obtemperet. Proinde quae fiunt, omnia necessario fieri prout ordinavit. Satanam quoque et omnes impios

of his inability to do otherwise. But this could certainly not apply to ~~every~~ instance, since the very necessity for compulsion rests upon an admitted opposition of desire, and therefore there is a lack of conscious obedience in desire. Moreover, Calvin's following assertion that the Devil

"opposes God with all his desires and purposes" definitely indicates that in these things he is not consciously obedient to the will of God, but merely unconsciously dominated by God's greater power, which uses him in ways he knows not of. In any case, however, he is still merely God's creature and God's instrument; for

"whether he will or not, he obeys his Creator", and all that he does, even as the expression of his corrupted nature, is determined by God. But here the 'obeys' must refer to unconscious service and not to what is strictly speaking 'obedience'.

## 2. The Corruption of Man.

When one has successfully accounted for the self-corruption of a powerful spiritual being like the Devil

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 eius imperio esse obnoxios, ut se movere nequeant, nisi quantum iusserit: manu enim eius velut freno aut capistro coerceri: ut tum eos retineat, quum libuerit: tum impellat at dirigat ad exsequenda sua iudicia."  
 (Corpus Ref., v.34, c.258.)

in a world created by a wholly good, omnipotent, and omniscient God (which I think Calvin has not done), the problem of the corruption of man becomes a comparatively simple one. And yet it is one which has peculiar difficulties of its own. Once there is admitted into the world a force of evil, the possibility of its corrupting man is one which must certainly be looked out for. But the question then arises: Did the force of evil corrupt man, or did man corrupt himself?.

According to Calvin the responsibility for the corruption rests upon man himself, though it was the Devil who tempted him. But here comes the whole question of temptation. If the Devil prevailed upon man through deceit, - because of man's stupidity and the Devil's superior subtlety, - then the responsibility for the Fall rests either upon the Devil for corrupting man, or upon God for making man unable to distinguish sufficiently between good and evil and for putting him at the mercy of the Devil. But in spite of possible interpretations of God's prohibiting man to eat of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil,<sup>1)</sup> Calvin contends

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1) Genesis 2:17. Calvin thinks that the special reason for God's prohibiting man to eat of this tree was "lest Adam should desire to be wise above measure", but that the more general reason was that "abstinence from the fruit of one tree was a kind of first lesson in obedience, that man might know he had a Director and Lord of his life, on whose will he ought to depend, and in whose commands he ought to acquiesce."  
(Commentary on Genesis - 2:16, 17.)



that God

"furnished the soul of man --- with a mind capable of discerning good from evil, and just from unjust; and of discovering, by the light of reason, what ought to be pursued or avoided", and that "in this integrity man was endued with free will, by which, if he had chosen, he might have obtained eternal life." 1)

Calvin therefore maintains:

"Adam --- could have stood if he would, since he fell merely by his own will. --- His choice of good and evil was free; and not only so, but his mind and will were possessed of consummate rectitude, and all his organic parts were rightly disposed to obedience, till, destroying himself, he corrupted all his excellencies. --- There is no excuse for him; he received so much, that he is the voluntary procurer of his own destruction." 1)

Whatever the other difficulties of this position it would appear from this account of the Fall that the Devil was a wholly unnecessary party to the procedure. If the possibility of evil existed in the world - and it must have, or the Devil could never have chosen it - and the ability to recognize good and evil, and to choose between them, resided in man, there was no need of the Devil to present him with the choice; unless, of course, the Devil used wiles to persuade him to the choice of evil, - in which case, they must have been either appeals to his already existing moral weakness, or some form of deception which even his supposedly

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1) Institutes, Bk. I., ch. 15, par. 8.

perfect understanding and reason were not sufficient to prevent. The whole point is that the supposition of an active personal force of evil in the situation is unnecessary and merely complicates it. For if the possibility of choosing evil did not exist already in man and in the situation in which he was placed, altogether apart from the influence of any active force of evil such as the Devil, then the real responsibility for man's defection rests in this active force and not in man; since the very idea of the necessity of an active force involves the idea of the necessity of some form of compulsion in order to man's overthrow. And the adoption of this explanation only pushes the difficulty one step farther back to the Devil's choice of evil.

It is insufficient to say that the Devil was simply a part of the situation in which man was placed; for this still leaves us with the seemingly insoluble problem of how that which is evil could have got inside a thoroughly good man and influenced him to do wrong. And if it did not in some way by its own initiative insinuate itself into man and as it were take up a position inside him, there is no possible meaning left for the term 'active'. For an active force can only



influence a man either by overpowering him, - in which case it compels him against his will, - or by deceiving him, or by making what he recognizes to be morally wrong attractive to him, - in which cases either his understanding is faulty or his character is already morally imperfect. To resort to the necessity of an active force in order to explain the Fall, therefore, is only to make the placing of the blame upon man more difficult than ever. Consequently, if the idea of the Devil only increases our difficulties in satisfactorily explaining the Fall, instead of lessening them, it would appear that we should do better if we left the Devil out of the consideration altogether.

But the important thing to note from the standpoint of our present discussion is that, in spite of all his attempts to relieve God of the responsibility for the entrance of sin, or evil, into the life of man, and to fix the responsibility upon man himself, Calvin is, consistently or otherwise, still unwilling to deprive God of the power to make and govern the world in whatever way seems good to Him. In setting forth the original goodness of man Calvin does not wish to preclude the possibility of later acknowledging that the Fall itself was decreed by God; for he remarks:

"Here it would be unreasonable to introduce the question respecting the secret predestination of God, because we are not now discussing what might possibly have happened or not, but what was the real nature of man." 1)

It is enough for him that,

"God was under no necessity to give (man) any other than an indifferent and mutable will, that from his fall he might educe matter for his own glory." 1)

However, the consistency of this passage with the previous one in which Calvin refers to man's will as being 'entirely conformed to the government of reason', and a reason which was capable of discovering 'what ought to be pursued or avoided', is something which it is rather difficult to see.

Calvin would have us believe that man originally was a perfect creature, and that among his perfections was a free will, - free in every sense of the word, of which there are three: first, a real ability to choose either one of two courses; second, the ability to choose the morally right course, - which would be freedom from sin; and third, the ability to act in accord with one's own desires under the circumstances, - which is freedom from external compulsion. But how man could have possessed such a free will, 'entirely conformed to the government of reason', and a reason capable of discovering 'what ought to be pursued or avoided', and yet have chosen the sinful course,

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1) Op.cit., same paragraph.

remains still a profound mystery. In what sense was man's will 'indifferent and mutable'? And in what sense had man the power to persevere in the good and not 'the will to use that power'? There must have been some reason for his choice of evil. It could not have been unbelief, for this would imply a faulty understanding or reason, - neither of which Calvin would admit. And it could not have been pride; for a pride so developed would itself be already sinful, and thus we should only be contending that man's character was evil before he made any evil choice, - a position which would be consistently Calvinistic but distinctly unsatisfactory, since it would solve no difficulties and would certainly not forward Calvin's present attempt to place the responsibility of the Fall wholly upon man, on the ground of his absolute freedom of will.

As a matter of fact the only freedom possible either before the Fall or after, is simply freedom from external compulsion. Adam's first choice, just as much as any of ours today, must have been determined by his character. Otherwise it was not his choice, and could only be explained on the Arminian supposition of the equilibrium of the will, which according to the apparently sound argument of the later Calvinists

would preclude all possibility of Adam being responsible for his conduct.<sup>1)</sup>

Calvin's attempt to explain the Fall is wholly unsatisfactory, and the problem of the origin of evil remains still unsolved. The problem of how it is possible for Adam to have been really confronted with two courses of conduct both of which were actually possible when God had secretly decreed only one of them,<sup>2)</sup> is a problem Calvin fails to consider. Bold as Calvin is with regard to God's control of the later affairs of men through Providence, he yet seems laboring under the impression that somehow in the beginning the responsibility must be laid upon man through the supposition of some inexplicable form of free will. But it is very hard to see how the bondage of sin imposed upon man by the Fall could make him any more God's creature than he was to start with. If he is not in any sense free from the direction of God now, as the Spirit of God moves mysteriously upon his soul,

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- 1) For instance, Jonathan Edwards, "On the Will", Part 3, section 6, - though the argument here is slightly different due to the context and general approach.
  - 2) In the "Congregation on Eternal Election", in 1562 (translation of the Rev. R. Govett, Jun., in a small volume entitled, "Calvinism by Calvin", London, 1840), Calvin declared: "But, it will be said, 'When God created Adam, did he not foresee what would occur? and did he not dispose it according to his will'. Yes truly, it cannot be denied. But man was created



it is extremely surprising that he should have been immediately after his creation. Did God have no purpose in the creating of man? Or was this purpose thwarted by man's choice? Calvin would not dare to affirm either of these positions. For him God is absolute sovereign of the world, and the whole creation moves at His behest. The supposition of original freedom of choice and its loss in the Fall appears to be quite gratuitous and wholly futile. Fall or no Fall, God is the Creator of both the Devil and man, and He created them good, but, according to Calvin, they corrupted themselves. Calvin cannot begin to reconcile these two aspects of the situation, but his deterministic conviction asserts itself in his simple avowal that even this self-corruption could not have been in any sense a thwarting of God's will, but must have been provided for by God's eternal decree.

In so far as Creation is concerned, the Calvinistic doctrine is simply:

"In the beginning GOD."

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just and good and upright in his nature; and if he has stumbled and fallen, if he has committed so great a transgression (as he has), that comes from him and cannot be attributed to God. 'Well, but if God had not decreed it, it would not have been so.' ---  
Yes, but let us beware of murmuring against our Judge, and let us know that what he has ordained in his counsels from all time is hidden from us, and that we cannot conceive it." (pp.98f.)

### The Doctrine of Providence.

We now come to the doctrine of Providence,<sup>1)</sup> where Calvin stands superb above the shifting timidity of many of his followers.

God's governing of the world is absolute and extends to all its parts. Nothing is beyond His command, and there are no fortuitous accidents. For as Calvin declares,

"The providence of God --- is opposed to fortune and fortuitous accidents. --- All events are governed by the secret counsel of God." 2)

"Nothing can happen but what is subject to his knowledge, and decreed by his will." 3)

Not a drop of rain falls but at His express command.

No wind ever rises or blows but by His order.

"All creatures, above and below, are ready for his service, that he may apply them to any use that he pleases." 4)

Nor is man excluded from this Divine control.

He, too, is wholly dependent upon God; for as Calvin remarks,

"It is, indeed, a ridiculous madness for miserable men to resolve on undertaking any work independently of God, whilst they cannot even speak a word but what he chooses." 5)

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1) Institutes, Book I., chs. 16-18.

2) Ibid., ch. 16, par. 2. 3) Ibid., par. 3. 4) Ibid., par. 7.

5) Ibid., par. 6. In the "Congregation" ("Calvinism by Calvin", p. 111), Calvin maintains: "We ought also to recognise in general, that God so governs all things

# 1. Providence distinguished from Fate.

But now let no one be so foolish as to contend that Calvinism is simply a belief in Fate, - as some mistakenly do. The distinction, as Calvin points out, is that the Stoics, who believed in Fate, imagined

"a necessity arising from a perpetual concatenation and intricate series of causes, contained in nature";

whereas Calvinism makes

"God the Arbiter and Governor of all things, who, in his own wisdom, has, from the remotest eternity, decreed what he would do, and now, by his own power, executes what he has decreed."1)

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by his providence that his will is as it were the source of every thing."

See also "De Libero Arbitrio"(p.33), where Calvin remarks: "Qui fit enim, ut vir providus, dum sibi consulit, imminentibus etiam malis se explicet: stultus inconsulta temeritate pereat? nisi quod et stultitia et prudentia divinae sunt dispensationis instrumenta in utramque partem." (Corpus Ref.,v.34,c.256.)

1) Institutes, Bk.I.,ch.16,par.8. See also "De Libero Arbitrio"(p.34), where Calvin declares:"Non sumus Stoici, qui fatum somniemus ex perpetua rerum connexione: sed tantum dicimus, Deum mundo praeesse, quem condidit: nec modo rerum eventus habere in sua potestate, sed hominum etiam corda gubernare, voluntates flectere pro suo arbitrio huc atque illuc, actionem esse moderatorem, ut nihil tandem, nisi quod decrevit, efficiant, quidquid conentur. Proinde quae fortuita maxime videntur, ea dicimus fieri necessario: non suapte natura, sed quoniam aeternum et stabile Dei consilium in illis gubernandis regnat. Neque tamen idcirco media illa excludimus, quae in voluntatis suae obsequium Deus destinavit: neque aut otiosa, aut supervacua dicimus, quae divinae providentiae complemento serviunt."  
(Corpus Ref.,v.34,c.257.)

Whence it appears that the difference is the fundamental one between Naturalism and Idealism. Fate is not intelligent and purposive. It is simply an inevitable chain of meaningless material causes and effects. It, as well as Providence, is thoroughly deterministic as regards material things; since both make world events inevitable. But strictly speaking, the inevitability of Fate is a purely mechanical one. It places man at the mercy of the physical world; but it does not determine his reactions to the world. Instead of being an intelligent and purposive Supreme Being who moves through man and through the world, - securing His ends with regard to the activities of men by mysteriously allowing them, unaware of constraint, to choose for themselves what He has already decreed they shall choose, - Fate is something which shapes the destinies of men against their wills and in spite of all their efforts, compelling them by the antagonism of superior force. The one doctrine leads to the recognition of the futility of all effort and the wisdom of killing all desire. The other fills a few at least with the dangerous but most dynamic conviction that they are the instruments of Almighty God; and it makes no man feel that the course of his life is directed without regard to his own will. He may be a puppet in the



hands of God; but if so, he is like all other puppets in that he is not conscious of being one: the strings controlling his life are the invisible cords which move his will, and not the thongs of Fate, which bind the soul and scourge the body until soul and body are stifled and beaten into the abject humility of defeat and despair.

But strangely enough, while Fate, in the strictest sense, means this inevitable chain of mechanical causation, it is often in common speech used as synonymous with 'Fortune', which, in turn, is commonly interpreted as 'Chance'. Thus two things the very opposite of each other in their true natures are closely linked together in common thought, simply because, from our standpoint, they are alike in making the course of life something beyond our control, and not only wholly unknown to us, but wholly unknowable. It is in this respect that the idea of Fate differs  
1) from modern Mechanism. Both Fate and Chance are from the human standpoint insoluble mysteries; though events, according to the former, are definitely determined, and according to the latter are not determined at all.

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1) They differ also in this further respect, that modern Mechanism definitely makes us nothing more than a part of the whole, and the whole nothing more than a machine.

In the light of present controversies regarding the true nature of statistical law, Augustine's statement of the nature of 'chance' is most interesting. He puts in the form of a supposition:—

"Perhaps what is commonly termed fortune is regulated by a secret order, and --- what we call chance is only that, with the reason and cause of which we are not acquainted", 1)

- that which for him is more than a mere possibility; because for him as for Calvin, there was no doubt about the matter: nothing happened fortuitously.

Thus, according to Calvin, not only are the events of life beyond the control of men; they are definitely in the control of God, and depend neither upon fickle Chance nor certain Fate. Though it must be admitted that, because the purposes of God are beyond our comprehension, it does often appear that things happen fortuitously, yet, nevertheless, they are not really so.

## 2. The Practical Effects of the Doctrine.

In view of the fact that the opponents of Calvinism generally hold that an acceptance of the Calvinistic doctrine of Providence would make men either arrogant in the assumption of their election, or hopeless and terrified at the thought of their depen-

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1) Quoted from the Institutes, Bk. I., ch. 16, par. 8.

dence, it might be well for us to note what Calvin himself says about the ends to be attained by the contemplation of God's omnipotent and universal government.

"The first end," he holds, "is, that it may keep us from all presumptuous confidence, and hold us fast in the fear of God; and also may stir us up to continual prayer. - A second end is, to bring us to rest upon God, with still and peaceful minds, and to teach us to despise, in all courage and security, the dangers which surround us on every side, and the numberless deaths which constantly threaten us from every quarter." 1)

Thus, if we have a proper conception of God, it does seem as if we should derive from this doctrine neither arrogance nor fear, but rather a truly Christian humility and courage. For one is inclined to agree with Calvin that the necessary consequences of the knowledge of our dependence upon God are:

"gratitude in prosperity, patience in adversity, and a wonderful security respecting the future." 2)

"Yet at the same time," Calvin adds, "a pious man will not overlook inferior causes"; 3)

he will not fail to thank those of God's ministers who aid him; nor will he fail to blame himself for his negligence and sin, - seeing that though these things are decreed by God, they are accomplished because of the creature's desire, the help of others being rendered

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1)"Calvin's Calvinism", Part 2,p.9.

2)Institutes, Bk.I.,ch.17,par.7. 3)Ibid.,par.9.

because they wished to extend it, his own sin being indicative of his own moral turpitude.

The Problem of Evil in connection with the Doctrine  
of Providence.

But here again we are confronted with the problem of Evil. For if one admits that there is no event but what is ordained by God, one must hold that all sinful acts are so, as well as good ones. And Calvin is ready to go this length; for he says explicitly:

"I admit --- even that thieves, and homicides, and other malefactors, are instruments of Divine providence, whom the Lord uses for the execution of the judgments which he has appointed. But I deny that this ought to afford any excuse for their crimes." 1)

And the reason for this qualification is, of course, that the criminal, just like anybody else, does what he does, not because he is aware of God's decree, but because he wishes to do this particular deed - generally in spite of the fact that he knows it to be against the revealed law of God and the dictates of conscience.

But this qualification is not enough to relieve God of the ultimate responsibility for the crime itself. The real problem is: how if all things are decreed by God, He is to be relieved of the responsibility for the evil character of the acts He decrees. For, as Calvin

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1) Institutes, op.cit., par.5.



admits, when it is said that God directs Satan and the reprobate to His own pleasure,

"the carnal understanding scarcely comprehends how he, acting by their means, contracts no defilement from their criminality, and, even in operations common to himself and them, is free from every fault, and yet righteously condemns those whose ministry he uses." 1)

Yet in trying to explain this Calvin will resort to no such futile subterfuge as the distinction between active and permissive decrees. All things happen as they do because God wills them so to be. Take what may be considered the most crucial test case: the death of our Lord.

"The Jews designed to destroy Christ; Pilate and his soldiers complied with their outrageous violence; yet the disciples, in a solemn prayer, confess that all the impious did nothing but what 'the hand and counsel of God determined before to be done;' (b) agreeably to what Peter had already preached, that he was 'delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God,' that he might be 'crucified and slain.' (c) As though he had said that God, who saw every thing from the beginning, with a clear knowledge and determined will, appointed what the Jews executed; as he mentions in another place: 'Those things which God before had showed by the mouth of all his prophets, that Christ should suffer, he hath so fulfilled.' (d)" 2)

How is it, though, that God can so control and direct men? He does not command them to do these particular acts in so many words. If He did, and they thus rendered Him conscious obedience, how could there

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1) Institutes, Bk. I., ch. 18, par. 1.

2) Ibid. (b) Acts 4:28. (c) Acts 2:23. (d) Acts 3:18.

be anything sinful in their doing these things? The fact is, according to Calvin, that sinful men comply with God's will without wishing to do so. The thing God does is to influence their minds and wills without their being aware of His influence. Calvin maintains:

"Nothing can be desired more explicit than (God's) frequent declarations, that he blinds the minds of men, strikes them with giddiness, inebriates them with the spirit of slumber, fills them with infatuation, and hardens their hearts." 1)

And in connection with the last point, it is interesting to note that Calvin has no regard for those who try to avoid the force of the assertions that God hardened Pharaoh's heart, by the foolish cavil that in reality God only permitted Pharaoh to harden his own heart.

But now does this not make God in a very real sense the author of evil? It is not enough to point out the distinction between God's secret will and His precepts. The fact remains that it has been admitted that God moves men to evil deeds for the fulfilment of His own designs; and the fundamental consistency of telling them not to do something and then so using them that they do it any way, is not as clear as Calvin seems to suppose.

It is all very well to say with Augustine that

"God fulfils his righteous will by the wicked wills of wicked men;" 2)

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1) Institutes, op.cit., par.2.

2) Ibid., par.3.

but to contend further with him that

"(God) doth not make wills evil; but useth the wills of men already evil, as He pleaseth; nor can he, of himself, will anything that is evil", 1)

is to manifest the inadequacy of both the Augustinian and Calvinistic treatments of this basic problem of sin and evil. How can God only use 'the wills of men already evil', when He is the one who created the very men themselves and decreed, as Calvin holds, their original defection?

We shall have more to say with regard to the difficulties of the Calvinistic position later. For the present we can find no more succinct statement of the deterministic force of Calvin's doctrines of Creation and Providence than is contained in his own words:

"The Will of GOD is the one principal and all high Cause of all things, in heaven and earth!" 2)

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1)"Calvin's Calvinism", Part 2, p.25.

2)Ibid., p.26.

## Chapter II.

### ORIGINAL SIN and TOTAL DEPRAVITY

We may consider that the doctrines of Creation and Providence, in some form or other, are the background of any Christian theology or philosophy. But these doctrines in themselves give us no key to the specific conditions in the world; even in their most rigorous Calvinistic form, they give us no insight into the specific details of history.

But Christianity, being essentially a religion of redemption, presupposes a very definite situation in the world as regards the nature and condition of men. Whatever the origin of evil, Christianity accepts it as a present fact, and is essentially concerned with saving men from its power. Regardless of what man was before the Fall, or how he fell, all orthodox schools of Christian theology are agreed that afterwards he was a lost sinner. And Calvinism takes up the more extreme position that he was, and is, a helpless sinner.

#### The Doctrine of Original Sin.

The position is arrived at in this way: Adam, as the representative of the race, secured for all men by



his defection an inheritance of sin. Therefore all men are born into the world with a sinful character as part of the punishment imposed upon them for the guilt of Adam's sin, which guilt they share with him. This is what is commonly known as the doctrine of Original Sin: by which is meant the contention that before a child has had any opportunity to make sinful choices it is already guilty of sin because of its inherited sinful dispositions, which will naturally and inevitably impel it into sinful courses of conduct and will ultimately result in its eternal torment.

Now it is apparent that this doctrine contains some very definitely deterministic implications; since according to it, what I am, even to the extent of what my moral character and natural dispositions are, is something determined before I come into being as a specific individual entity. Of course, it is difficult to see how any theory of human nature can avoid postulating some hereditary influence which would be beyond the control of the individual and would to a certain extent determine what sort of an individual he was and was to become. But the doctrine of Original Sin is more definite than this. It says that I bear part of the guilt of my original progenitor, and because of my inheritance, am born, not only with a

definite tendency toward evil, but with an inevitably evil nature. I am a sinner before I have had a chance to say whether I want to be or not; and when I am given the chance to say, my answer is already determined, - though of course the determination is effected through the inevitability of my wanting to do the wrong thing when I am given the chance.

#### The Doctrine of Total Depravity.

But Calvinism is even more thoroughgoing than just this. Some theologians, notably the Arminian, contend that though I am a sinner by birth, I am yet not beyond doing something to help myself out of the difficulty, because I have a free will, and when occasion offers I am perfectly able to make a good choice, which will be the first step in my redemption. But Calvin denies this. For him

"original sin --- appears to be an hereditary pravity and corruption of nature, diffused through all the parts of the soul, rendering us obnoxious to the Divine wrath, and producing in us those works which the Scripture calls 'works of the flesh'. --- These two things therefore," he adds, "should be distinctly observed: first, that our nature being so totally vitiated and depraved, we are, on account of this very corruption, considered as convicted and justly condemned in the sight of God, to whom nothing is acceptable but righteousness, innocence, and purity. ---"

The other thing to be remarked is," he continues, "that this depravity never ceases in us, but is perpetually producing new fruits, those works of the flesh, which we have before described, like the emission of flame and sparks from a heated furnace, or like the streams of water from a never failing spring." 1)

Original sin, on this view, is something more than a mere privation of original righteousness. It is an active thing, expressive of the corruption of the whole man. According to Calvin,

"Sin has possessed all the powers of the soul, since Adam departed from the fountain of righteousness. For man has not only been ensnared by the inferior appetites, but abominable impiety has seized the very citadel of his mind, and pride has penetrated into the inmost recesses of his heart. --- Paul removes every doubt by informing us that the corruption resides not in one part only, but that there is nothing pure and uncontaminated by its mortal infection. --- Man is so totally overwhelmed, as with a deluge, that no part is free from sin." 2)

Yet neither the enemies nor the adherents of Calvin must foolishly misconstrue this doctrine of Total Depravity, as is so often done. Because depravity extends to every part of man, and is total in the

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1) Institutes, Book II., ch. 1, par. 8.

2) Ibid., par. 9. See also "De Libero Arbitrio" (p. 35), where Calvin says, "Dicimus, homini ingenitam perversitatem ex haereditaria corruptione: ut quidquid peccati, sibi imputet, tunc alicuius culpam transferat, quum in se ipso inveniatur mali radicem." (Corpus Ref., v. 34, cc. 257f.)

sense of leaving no part of him wholly good and unaffected by its taint, we must not suppose that each part of man is totally depraved and that man himself is therefore completely evil. For as Calvin says,

"Reason, --- by which man distinguishes between good and evil, by which he understands and judges, being a natural talent, could not be totally destroyed, but is partly debilitated, partly vitiated, so that it exhibits nothing but deformity and ruin. In this sense John says, that 'the light' still 'shineth in darkness', but that 'the darkness comprehended it not.'<sup>(z)</sup> In this passage both these ideas are clearly expressed - that some sparks continue to shine in the nature of man, even in its corrupt and degenerate state, which prove him to be a rational creature, and different from the brutes, because he is endued with understanding; and yet that this light is smothered by so much ignorance, that it cannot act with any degree of efficacy. So the will, being inseparable from the nature of man, is not annihilated; but it is fettered by depraved and inordinate desires, so that it cannot aspire after any thing that is good." (1)

Consistently or otherwise, Calvin is unwilling to consider even fallen man as entirely separated from God and the influence of the Holy Spirit, for he declares, in a passage which it would be well, for both those who ridicule Calvinism and those who reject all the innovations of secular science, to consider:

"Whenever, therefore, we meet with heathen writers, let us learn from that light of truth which is admirably displayed in their

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1) Institutes, Bk. II., ch. 2, par. 12. (Underlining mine.)  
(z) John 1:5.



works, that the human mind, fallen as it is,  
and corrupted from its integrity, is yet  
invested and adorned by God with excellent  
talents. If we believe that the Spirit of  
God is the only fountain of truth, we shall  
neither reject not despise the truth itself,  
wherever it shall appear, unless we wish to  
 insult the Spirit of God; for the gifts of  
 the Spirit cannot be undervalued without  
 offering contempt and reproach to the Spirit  
 himself. Now, shall we deny the light of truth  
 to the ancient lawyers, who have delivered  
 such just principles of civil order and polity?  
 Shall we say that the philosophers were blind  
 in their exquisite contemplation and in their  
scientific description of nature? Shall we  
 say that those, who by the art of logic have  
 taught us to speak in a manner consistent  
with reason, were destitute of understanding  
 themselves? Shall we accuse those of insanity,  
 who by the study of medicine have been exer-  
 cising their industry for our advantage? What  
 shall we say of all the mathematics? Shall we  
 esteem them the delirious ravings of madmen?  
 On the contrary, we shall not be able even to  
 read the writings of the ancients on these  
 subjects without great admiration; we shall  
 admire them, because we shall be constrained  
 to acknowledge them to be truly excellent. ---

"Yet let us not forget that these are  
most excellent gifts of the Divine Spirit,  
which for the common benefit of mankind he  
dispenses to whomsoever he pleases. ---  
 Nor is there any reason for inquiring, what  
 intercourse with the Spirit is enjoyed by  
 the impious who are entirely alienated from  
 God. For when the Spirit of God is said to  
 dwell only in the faithful, that is to be  
 understood of the Spirit of sanctification,  
 by whom we are consecrated as temples to God  
 himself. Yet it is equally by the energy of  
the same Spirit, that God replenishes, actuates,  
and quickens all creatures, and that according  
 to the property of each species which he has  
 given it by the law of creation. Now, if it  
has pleased the Lord that we should be assisted

in physics, logic, mathematics, and other arts and sciences, by the labour and ministry of the impious, let us make use of them; lest, if we neglect to use the blessings therein freely offered to us by God, we suffer the just punishment of our negligence. ---

"Let us conclude, therefore, that it is evident in all mankind, that reason is a peculiar property of our nature, which distinguishes us from the brute animals, as sense constitutes the difference between them and things inanimate. --- But whereas some excel in penetration, others possess superior judgment, and others have a greater aptitude to learn this or that art, in this variety God displays his goodness to us, that no one may arrogate to himself as his own what proceeds merely from the Divine liberality. --- Moreover, God inspires particular motions according to the vocation of each individual. --- Even in Homer, men are said to excel in abilities, not only as Jupiter has distributed to every one, but according as he guides from day to day. --- In this diversity we perceive some remaining marks of the Divine image, which distinguish the human race in general from all the other creatures." 1)

In this splendid statement we see not only the proper qualification of the doctrine of Total Depravity, but in addition a very noticeable application of the Calvinistic doctrine of Providence. Man is still God's servant; and the world is still God's world.

#### 1. Man the Slave of Sin.

But the really significant point is that men, with all their remaining natural endowments, are the

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1)Op.cit., pars. 15-17. (Underlining mine.)

slaves of sin, unable to discover a way of salvation, incapable of putting any plan into execution should they light upon one, indifferent to their bondage. They cannot through reason alone come to an adequate knowledge of the love of God and to a saving faith in His Son Jesus Christ, which is essential to redemption. For as the Apostle Paul says,

"No man can say that Jesus is Lord, but by the Holy Ghost." 1)

And as Calvin adds,

"Christ also has clearly confirmed this by his own declaration, that no man can come to him, except the Father draw him. (p) --- It must be concluded, therefore, that there is no admission into the kingdom of God, but for him whose mind has been renewed by the illumination of the Holy Spirit." 2)

But the deficiency is not alone an intellectual one; and the need is for a complete change of character.

a. No Freedom of the Will in Libertarian Sense.

Whatever the endowments of the original Adam, man since the Fall has no such thing as freedom of the will, if by 'freedom of the will' we mean what Origen described as

"a power of reason to discern good and evil, of will to choose either." 3)

1) I Cor. 12:3.

2) Institutes, Bk. II., ch. 2, par. 20.  
(p) John 6:44.

3) Ibid., par. 4.

Calvin agrees with Peter Lombard that, though we may no longer have "an equal power to do or to think good or evil", yet we are free in the sense of being "free from constraint";

and he admits that

"This liberty is not diminished, although we are corrupt, and the slaves of sin, and capable of doing nothing but sin." 1)

But as this freedom to sin is not what is generally signified by the term 'Free Will', Calvin advocates discontinuing the use of it altogether. 2)

What is the use of talking about 'freedom of the will', when man is not free to do good unless he is liberated by Divine grace? As Calvin maintains,

"Simply to will belongs to man; to will what is evil, to corrupt nature; to will what is good, to grace." --- The will, being deprived of its liberty, is necessarily drawn or led into evil." 3)

## 2. Moral Freedom synonymous with Moral Necessity.

But let us not suppose that we sustain any real loss by giving up all title to 'free will'. The only

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1) Institutes, Bk. II., ch. 2, par. 6.

2) Ibid., par. 8.

3) Ibid., ch. 3, par. 5. See also Calvin's "Answer to Certain Slanders and Blasphemies, etc." (translated by John Fielde, in a volume of Sermons, London, 1574, p. 174), where he declares: "You shall find throughout all my books, how I have taught, that we must not seek the cause of perdition anywhere else but in



'freedom' worth having is synonymous with 'necessity'; and this we still have, and is all we have ever had. But a great many misunderstand this because they fail to distinguish properly between necessity and compulsion.<sup>1)</sup> To say that man is 'necessarily drawn to evil' is not the same as saying that he is 'compelled to do evil'; for the 'necessity' spoken of here is not the 'necessity of compulsion', but simply the 'necessity of acting in accord with one's own nature', - which in our case, since the Fall, is sinful. Consequently, the 'necessity' here spoken of, instead of being the same as 'external compulsion', is exactly the opposite, and is really equivalent to 'freedom from compulsion'. Therefore 'freedom' as it is applicable to man is identical with this 'moral necessity'; for it means that man's volitions are spontaneous or voluntary, - which is simply another way of saying that they are conditioned or determined by the character of the man

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ourselves, in our perverse will. But it followeth not, that it is in us to change our will, which is altogether given to evil."

We find throughout all Calvinism this strange assumption that man left to himself can always do evil, but never good. But how does it happen that the natural tendency is downwards? Is there in things a tendency towards not-being, which God alone can overcome? (See Gilson's "Le Thomisme", p. 121.)

1) For additional points about 'necessity', see "Calvin's Calvinism", Part 2, pp. 14f.; also Ch. X. of Thesis, and Edwards, "On the Will", Part 1, Sect. 3; Part 2, Sect. 8; Part 3, Sect. 3; Part 4, Sect. 4.

himself. Wherefore, if man's character is evil, his volitions will necessarily be evil, as well. For, as we have already seen,<sup>1)</sup> if this were not the case, there would either be no sense in calling him evil, or else no sense in speaking of the particular volitions referred to as his. For if his volitions were not necessitated by his character, they would either be determined by nothing at all, - in which case they would result from pure chance, and nobody and nothing could in any sense be responsible for them, - or else they would be determined by somebody or something other than the man himself; and in neither case could they be called his spontaneous and voluntary volitions.

The point in all this which is deterministic is that, being sinful, man is not free to choose between good and evil, but must inevitably choose evil. Thus because of the previous history of the race, man is shut up to an evil character and cannot free himself from the bondage of sin, - simply because being sinful by nature, he will never have sufficient insight or desire to be free from sin, unless God changes his heart; for the other half of the Calvinistic contention that man is a slave to sin, is the firm conviction

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1) Above, p.25.

that all good works are from God. According to Calvin, Paul teaches that

"Our salvation is gratuitous, because the beginning of all good is from the second creation, which we obtain in Christ, --- and all the parts of good works, even from the first inclination of the mind, are entirely from God." 1)

As a matter of fact, both Calvin and Augustine appear to contend that everything in man is derived from God, not in the sense of original creation, but in the sense of Divine instigation; for Calvin quotes with highest approval the assertion of Augustine, that

"Men labour to discover in our will something that is our own, and not derived from God; and how any such discovery can be made, I know not." 2)

But if this is the case, how it is possible for God to be any more responsible for man's salvation than for his sin, it is difficult to see; for in both cases God acts through the human will, and every affection of this will, whether for good or evil, is instigated by Him.

One might justly argue that on the matter of all good coming directly from God, Calvin begs the question; for he assumes that all men are in themselves evil, and then when he finds one who shows some signs

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1) Institutes, Bk. II., ch. 3, par. 6.

2) Ibid., par. 7.

of goodness, he contends that this apparent virtue is either a sham, or the special gift of God, - because it is not possible for man to be truly good by himself, since while he is not wholly evil, there is no positive goodness in him. And this same weakness in the argument is brought to light by Calvin's contention that

"The origin of all good clearly appears, from a plain and certain reason, to be from no other than from God alone; for no propensity of the will to any thing good can be found but in the elect," 1)

- for our only way of determining who are the elect is by the observation of their good conduct. But there is nothing in 'good conduct' as such that indicates any special election, unless we have already assumed what we are trying to prove, namely that there is no source of good in man himself.

In passing, one other thing might be mentioned. 2)  
When Calvin speaks of God's renovation of the 'will', and when he and Augustine refer to God's influence on the 'will', it would seem that they are both speaking very loosely, since in line with the whole Calvinistic and Augustinian position, the 'will' must remain exactly the same as it was before, and the part transformed by God and acted upon by Him must be that which lies back of the 'will', the man himself.

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1) Op.cit., par. 8.

2) Ibid., pars. 6-8.



It must be admitted that the Calvinistic contention that God is the author of all good intention and good endeavor,<sup>1)</sup> coupled with the view that man is by nature, since the Fall, the complete slave of sin, makes the ultimate destiny of man a matter solely of God's determination; for it shuts man up to an evil nature, an evil life, an eternal damnation - unless God comes to his rescue. If God does not rescue him, man's fate is sealed by the sin of the race in Adam; if God does rescue him, it is sealed by God. In neither case does the individual himself decide the matter, - simply because the individual does not decide before he comes into being, what sort of an individual he is to be, and simply because once he is, the absolute connection of cause and effect which underlies the whole Calvinistic world - since the Fall (and is the real core of any Determinism) - prevents him changing himself.

But unless we connect this doctrine up to that of Providence in such a way as to make all things depend on God - evil as well as good - we get a dualistic Determinism (if such is possible), with God as a sort of overload, controlling and restraining Evil, but not its Creator. And this rests either upon an ultimate Manichaeian dualism, or else upon an inconsistent one

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<sup>1)</sup>Op.cit., par.9.



which had its beginning in a Fall which occurred in Time, but had no cause.

In any case, these doctrines of Original Sin and Total Depravity, with all their deterministic elements, really add nothing to the force of the deterministic implications of the doctrines of Creation and Providence.

### Chapter III.

#### IRRESISTIBLE GRACE and PERSEVERANCE

##### The Calvinistic Doctrines.

Just as man is unable to free himself from the bondage of sin, so, according to Calvin, he is unable to resist the grace of God when the Holy Spirit lays hold upon him. He is unable to do good without God; he is unable not to do good when God inwardly impels him to it. As Calvin says,

God "moves the will, not according to the system maintained and believed for many ages, in such a manner that it would afterwards be at our option either to obey the impulse or to resist it, but by an efficacious influence." 1)

And in another place he affirms:

"We have a testimony from the mouth of Augustine to the point which we are principally endeavouring to establish; that grace is not merely offered by the Lord to be either received or rejected, according to the free choice of each individual, but that it is grace which produces both the choice and the will in the heart; so that every subsequent good work is the fruit and effect of it, and that it is obeyed by no other will but that which it has produced. For this is his language also in another place - that it is grace alone which performs every good work in us." 2)

These two ideas are so closely connected in

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1) Institutes, Bk. II., ch. 3, par. 10.

2) Ibid., par. 13. See also "Calvinism by Calvin", p. 108, where Calvin remarks: "All believe not. Why? Because God exerts not his grace towards all."

Calvin's mind that he is continually combining them: first, that man is incapable of good apart from the grace of God; second, that he is incapable of resisting the grace of God. Now it is apparent that the combination is deterministic, in that it leaves man no ability to choose between good and evil on his own account. He retains the freedom of doing what he pleases; but without grace he pleases to sin, and with it he pleases to do otherwise.

Furthermore, out of this doctrine of Irresistible Grace there comes the other distinctly Calvinistic one of the Perseverance of the Saints. As Calvin puts it,

"God gives a constancy that is effectual to perseverance." 1)

Some, indeed, contend that perseverance is accomplished by God cooperating with us and by His conferring additional blessings upon those who are grateful for the first bestowal of grace and make good use of it. But as Calvin points out, all this assumes that we can either accept or reject grace as we choose; whereas the real truth of the matter is that our gratitude is a part of grace itself, and grace sufficiently bestowed insures its proper use, since it is actually not we who use grace, but grace which uses us. And surely,

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1) Institutes, op.cit., par. 10.



if we have nothing to say about the acceptance or rejection of grace, and our original impulsion to the good is wholly from God, there can be little sense in distinguishing between God's operating through us to accomplish our perseverance and His cooperating with us to the same end; for there seems little indeed left to us in the way of an original contribution. And on the other hand, if we could not resist grace at the outset, there seems no reason to suppose we can resist its continuance: so that if God has determined that we shall persevere, our doing so is inevitable.

The conclusion of this phase of the matter is simply that, to use Calvin's words,

"The Lord both begins and completes the good work in us; that it may be owing to him, that the will conceives a love for what is right, that it is inclined to desire it, and is excited and impelled to endeavour to attain it; and then that the choice, desire, and endeavour do not fail, but proceed even to the completion of the desired effect; lastly, that a man proceeds with constancy in them, and perseveres even to the end." 1)

"But", Calvin says in another place, "the subject cannot be comprised in a more concise summary than in the eighth chapter of (Augustine's) treatise addressed to Valentine; where he teaches, that the human will obtains, not grace by liberty, but liberty by grace; that being impressed by the same grace with a disposition of delight, it is formed for perpetuity; that it is strengthened with invincible fortitude; that while grace reigns,

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1) Institutes, op.cit., par. 9.

it never falls, but, deserted by grace, falls immediately; that by the gratuitous mercy of the Lord, it is converted to what is good, and, being converted, perseveres in it; that the first direction of the human will to that which is good, and its subsequent constancy, depend solely on the will of God, and not on any merit of man. Thus there is left to man", Calvin concludes, "such a free will, if we choose to give that appellation, as (Augustine) describes in another place, that he can neither be converted to God nor continue in God but by grace; and that all the ability which he has is derived from grace." 1)

Certainly to call this 'free will' is to decorate a very diminutive thing with too superb a title.

### The Problem of Evil.

But now this doctrine of Irresistible Grace leads us again into a consideration of the problem of evil. For if as Calvin says,

"man is so enslaved by sin, as to be of his own nature incapable of an effort, or even an aspiration, towards that which is good",

but God may free whomsoever He will from this bondage by the irresistible power of His grace, then is not God the one ultimately responsible for man remaining in sin?

Calvin does not decline to admit that, in one way, it all ultimately goes back to God; for he contends:

"Those whom the Lord does not favour with the government of his Spirit, he abandons, in righteous judgment, to the influence of Satan." 2)

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1) Institutes, Bk. II., ch. 3, par. 14. 2) Ibid., ch. 4, par. 1.

All of which is very definite, except the matter of 'righteous judgment'. This would seem to imply that the 'abandonment to the influence of Satan' is a 'righteous judgment' upon those whom 'the Lord does not favour with the government of his Spirit', and that the 'righteous judgment' is for past sins. But now, the original 'abandonment to the influence of Satan' could not have been a 'righteous judgment' for past sins; for according to the Calvinistic view of the Fall, the first sin was due to 'the influence of Satan', and man was most certainly 'abandoned', in the sense that he was not sustained by 'irresistible grace', - which must be the sense of 'abandoned' here.

But if we interpret this statement as meaning that God's 'abandonment' of men in the present to 'the influence of Satan' is a 'righteous judgment' upon them for their sins in and since the Fall, then two things must be considered. First, have we really explained the Fall in such a way as to put the real blame of it on man, and have we shown at all clearly how it is that man in the present is to blame for his original sin, for which the 'righteous judgment' is his 'abandonment to the influence of Satan'; and if we have not done both of these things, is there any real significance in talking about 'righteous

judgment' in this way? And second, granted that we have done both of these things, we have only shown that all men are under just condemnation and may be justly 'abandoned to the influence of Satan' so that they may become increasingly evil; we have not at all explained why it is that certain ones are 'favoured with the government of the Spirit', while others no more unworthy are 'abandoned'. And such an explanation is impossible according to Calvinism; for the moment any distinction is made in the merit of individuals, the favor of the Spirit ceases, to that extent, to be of grace. Of course, it might be contended that none deserves the gift of the Spirit, but that God makes His selection on the basis of comparative excellence. But this would certainly make salvation depend in part, at least, upon the inherent goodness of the individual, and as we have already seen,<sup>1)</sup> Calvin is concerned to maintain that all men are totally depraved and that God makes no distinction between them on the basis of their own merits; for if God does make such a distinction, even though He is at perfect liberty justly to condemn all and makes the distinction gratuitously, yet, after it is made, salvation becomes not a matter of grace, but of reward. But now it might

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1)Above, ch.2.



very well be argued that if there is no such distinction actually existing between the merits of men, then the 'abandonment' of certain individuals who are no worse than those who are not 'abandoned' can certainly not be a 'righteous judgment' upon their sins! The sins may deserve such an 'abandonment'; but in the light of the apparently arbitray exceptions, is the whole procedure just? In any case the distinction is not shown to be a 'righteous judgment', for no rational or just reason can be given for it. The sins of the abandoned are not the reason for their being abandoned while others just as sinful are saved.

With regard again to the whole question of the necessity for Satan, it might be well to quote two sentences from Calvin which appear in this connection. They are as follows:

"When the will of the natural man is said to be subject to the power of the devil, so as to be directed by it, the meaning is, not that it resists and is compelled to a reluctant submission, as masters compel slaves to an unwilling performance of their commands, but that, being fascinated by the fallacies of Satan, it necessarily submits itself to all his directions. --- The blinding of the wicked, and all those enormities which attend it, are called the works of Satan, the cause of which must nevertheless be sought only in the human will from which proceeds the root of evil and in which rests the foundation of the kingdom of Satan, that is, sin." 1)

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1) Institutes, Bk.II., ch.4, par.1.

There appears to be a distinction here between the action of God upon the wills of men and the action of Satan. God influences the will of the individual by His complete control of the man himself; the Devil influences the will by external appeals. Thus in each case the willing is spontaneous and voluntary; but in the one case it is inevitably impelled; in the other it is simply attracted. But as a matter of fact, one could say all of real significance in these two sentences without even mentioning Satan; for 'sin' itself might very well be substituted for 'the devil' and 'Satan' without any substantial loss, - especially since the last sentence makes the human will the cause of all evil works, the root of evil, and the very support for the foundation of the kingdom of Satan: so that it is hard to see what important function the Devil himself fulfils which the very possibility of evil choice on the part of man would not itself account for.

However, it is God's part in sin that we are most concerned with at present. And with regard to the fact that He has a part Calvin speaks with no uncertain voice. According to him, God exerts upon the world a 'universal influence',

"by which all creatures are sustained,  
and from which they derive an ability  
to perform whatever they do."

But it is not to this universal and general influence  
that Calvin is referring in this connection; it is  
rather to ~~that~~

"that special influence which appears  
in every particular act."

The meaning of this must be that not only does God  
decree the world as a whole and bring into being its  
entire history by the command which starts its universal  
order, and not only does the whole structure depend  
upon His wish that it might continue, but the relation  
of God to the world is so close that every particular  
act is instigated by Him directly.

We have then the question: In what way does God  
instigate evil acts? - How is it possible for Him to  
instigate them at all and yet be free from the guilt  
of sin? As Calvin asks the question with regard to the  
particular case of Job's sufferings at the hand of the  
Chaldeans -

"How can we refer the same action to God,  
to Satan, and to man, as being each the  
author of it, without either excusing Satan  
by associating him with God, or making God  
the author of evil?"

His answer is in accord with Augustine:

"Very easily, if we examine, first, the end for which the action was designed, and secondly the manner in which it was effected. The design of the Lord is to exercise the patience of his servant by adversity; Satan endeavours to drive him to despair: the Chaldeans, in defiance of law and justice, desire to enrich themselves by the property of another. So great a diversity of design makes a great distinction in the action. There is no less difference in the manner. The Lord permits his servant to be afflicted by Satan: the Chaldeans, whom he commissions to execute his purpose, he permits and resigns to be impelled by Satan: Satan, with his envenomed stings, instigates the minds of the Chaldeans, otherwise very depraved, to perpetrate the crime: they furiously rush into the act of injustice, and overwhelm themselves in criminality. --- We see, then, that the same action is without absurdity ascribed to God, to Satan, and to man; but the variety in the end and in the manner, causes the righteousness of God to shine without the least blemish, and the iniquity of Satan and man to betray itself to its own disgrace." 1)

But now, one cannot help wondering if this really does solve the difficulty. For instance, the reference to the Chaldeans being 'otherwise very depraved': was not this very depravity due to the previous influence of Satan, which God had previously permitted or decreed? It is all very well to speak of three actors in the same event, and to point out three different motives. But according to strict consistency Calvin can only, in the last analysis, admit one actor - God, - since, according to his own teaching,

1) Institutes, Bk. II., ch. 4, par. 2.



it is God who acts through Satan and the Chaldeans to accomplish His ends, and they can do nothing without His decree and instigation. For Calvin is very definite in his opposition to those who resort to subtle distinctions between 'permission' and 'prescience', on the one hand, and an active influence, on the other. For he says,

"I think we are in no danger, if we simply maintain what the Scripture delivers. --- **God is very frequently said to blind and harden the reprobate, and to turn, incline, and influence their hearts**, as I have elsewhere more fully stated. But it affords no explication of the nature of this influence to resort to prescience or permission. We answer, therefore, that it operates in two ways. For, since, when his light is removed, nothing remains but darkness and blindness; since, when his Spirit is withdrawn, our hearts harden into stones; since, when his direction ceases, they are warped into obliquity; he is properly said to blind, harden, and incline those whom he deprives of the power of seeing, obeying, and acting aright. The second way, which is much more consistent with strict propriety of language, is, when, for the execution of his judgments, he, by means of Satan, the minister of his wrath, directs their counsels to what he pleases, and excites their wills and strengthens their efforts. Thus, when Moses relates that Sihon the king would not grant a free passage to the people, because God had 'hardened his spirit, and made his heart obstinate', he immediately subjoins the end of God's design: 'That he might deliver him into thy hand.' (o) Since God willed his destruction, the obduration of his heart, therefore, was the Divine preparation for his ruin." 1)

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1) Op.cit., par.3. (o) Deut.2:30.

But again certain difficulties arise. When Calvin speaks of 'the reprobate' whom God blinds and hardens, does he mean those who are already reprobate, or those who become so by this blinding and hardening process? Presumably he means the former, for on the latter interpretation they would not be reprobate at the time the process began, and as he held that all men were reprobate at birth, they must have been already in that condition before they were blinded or hardened to any specific later act of evil. Consequently, the implication is that, being already reprobate, they deserve, in American slang, 'all that's coming to them', and God is quite justified in punishing them with greater sinfulness if He sees fit. But of course this introduces a new factor, since, as has been pointed out above, one cannot account for their original reprobation as punishment for their already existing sinfulness; and it most certainly makes God the only one responsible for their particular increase of sinfulness or reprobation. The second portion of the argument is open to the same censure; for it, too, again makes God's part in the procedure a righteous judgment. But we have already seen that this is scarcely satisfactory.

I think we must just admit that, in spite of all his attempts and the value of his suggestions, Calvin

has not succeeded in solving the problem of evil (which, after all, is not strange). The specific instance of Sihon must be interpreted as being in accord with what precedes it, and it was doubtless meant to be so by Calvin. But there is no mention in it that the hardening of Sihon was punishment for his already existing sins: It only very definitely states that it was Divinely ordained preparation for his Divinely ordained ruin.

This after all is the only explanation open to Calvin: to explain sinfulness in terms of God's foreordained end for the individual, and not in terms of punishment for previous sinfulness; for this latter procedure only pushes the difficulty farther back, and unless dealt with ultimately in the way suggested, involves one in an infinite regress. The real question is, why God foreordains some men to destruction and some to eternal life. And the only answer is one which, strangely enough Calvin himself gives,<sup>1)</sup> that God is motivated by some good and sufficient reason which is beyond our comprehension (which again is nothing that should cause us undue alarm, since it would be strange indeed if we could fully comprehend all the wonders of the universe). The difficulties of such a position we

1) For instance in "Calvinism by Calvin", pp. 89, 93; but the same may be found also in the Institutes and other treatises.

shall have to consider later; but they could certainly not be greater than those involved in this inconsistent attempt to excuse God's part in sin on the basis of its being punishment for previous sin. And it has the distinct advantage of simplifying the problem by making ~~its treatment~~ consistent with the basic Calvinistic position of God's absolute omnipotence.

God's All-pervasive and Active Influence.

The important point to note in all Calvin's treatment of Grace is its relation to Providence, and the fact that, according to Calvin, even in acts of evil, God exerts an active influence over the wills of men; for he maintains:

"The power of the providence of God extends so far, as not only to cause those events to succeed which he foresees will be best, but also to incline the wills of men to the same objects."

And he goes on to say,

"Indeed, if we view the administration of external things with our own reason, we shall not doubt their subjection to the human will; but if we listen to the numerous testimonies, which proclaim that in these things also the hearts of men are governed by the Lord, they will constrain us to submit the will itself to the special influence of God." 1)

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1) Institutes, Bk. II., ch. 4, par. 6:



Immediately afterwards he subjoins the following:

"God, whenever he designs to prepare the way for his providence, inclines and moves the wills of men even in external things, and --- their choice is not so free, but that its liberty is subject to the will of God. --- Your mind depends more on the influence of God, than on the liberty of your own choice." 1)

He then quotes the following from Augustine, as expressive of his own views:

"The Scripture, if it be diligently examined, shows, not only that the good wills of men, which he turns from evil into good, and directs to good actions and to eternal life, but also that those wills which relate to the present life, are subject to the power of God, so that he, by a most secret, but yet a most righteous judgment, causes them to be inclined whither he pleases, and when he pleases, either for the communication of benefits, or for the infliction of punishments." 2)

Calvin does not want us to suppose that the doctrine of Irresistible Grace in any way limits God's providential governing of the world and the hearts of men merely to His indispensable part in the rescuing of those who are saved. It is not the sole activity of God in the lives of men: it is only one part of His activity; but its invincibility may serve to indicate the determining power of the whole.

#### 1. Freedom.

And now, at the risk of repetition and of relying

1) and 2) Op.cit., par.7. (Underlining mine.)

too much upon the exact words of Calvin, let us consider a paragraph from the Institutes, which expresses the problem of Freedom again very clearly and succinctly, perhaps bringing out a slightly different aspect of it. It immediately follows the above quotation from Augustine. Calvin remarks:

"Here let the reader remember, that the ability of the human will is not to be estimated from the event of things, as some ignorant men are preposterously accustomed to do. For they conceive themselves fully and ingeniously to establish the servitude of the human will, because even the most exalted monarchs have not all their desires fulfilled. But this ability, of which we speak, is to be considered within man, and not to be measured by external success. For in the dispute concerning free will, the question is not, whether a man, notwithstanding external impediments, can perform and execute whatever he may have resolved in his mind, but whether in every case his judgment exerts freedom of choice, and his will freedom of inclination. If men possess both these, then Attilius Regulus, when confined to the small extent of a cask stuck round with nails, will possess as much free will as Augustus Caesar, when governing a great part of the world with his nod." 1)

All of which is very true, but must not be interpreted as indicating that Calvin has suddenly turned libertarian. He is here only opposing those who take the wrong line of attack against the libertarians. Man's freedom is not to be determined by his ability to do whatever he pleases regardless of

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1)Op.cit.,par.8.

circumstances; but is to be determined by whether or not he is free to choose what he will do under these circumstances. And in this sense Regulus is as free as Augustus. Circumstances may limit the possibilities, but they can never wholly determine a man's choice within the limits of the possibilities which remain. One can never force a man's will! - except by influencing the man. The only thing which wholly determines a man's choice is the character of the man himself. But according to Calvin, behind the man himself is GOD, - controlling and directing his will, by controlling and directing him.

## 2. Necessity and Responsibility.

We have already seen that 'necessity' is synonymous in the moral sphere with 'freedom'<sup>1)</sup>; but it would perhaps be just as well to consider here Calvin's treatment of the relation between 'necessity' and moral 'responsibility', - for after all, we are making a study not of specific problems but of Calvin's treatment of them, and it may be often necessary to bring the same or similar subjects in in different contexts, as he does. He is trying here to meet the objection that

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1) Above, ch.2, pp.46ff.

"If sin be necessary, it ceases to be sin;  
and if it be voluntary, then it may be  
avoided;"

and he does so by flatly denying

"that sin is the less criminal, because it  
is necessary,"

1)  
and avoidable because voluntary. The first part of  
his denial he bases on Adam's freedom; but this, as  
we have seen, is wholly unsatisfactory, and he would  
have done better to resort to his previous explanation  
that the necessity here spoken of is not incompatible  
with spontaneity. As to the second part: he is exactly  
right in contending that 'voluntary' does not mean the  
same as 'freedom' in the peculiar sense of ability to  
avoid what is determined by man's very nature. The  
fact that a crime is voluntary is the very thing which  
precludes the possibility of its being avoided; because  
it is the determination of volitions by character which  
is the absolutely certain factor. But according to  
Calvin, the fact that the choice of sin is voluntary

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1) See "De Libero Arbitrio" (p.33), where Calvin says,  
in reply to Pighius' question regarding the punishment  
of crimes which are necessary: "Respondeo, in hoc  
consistere huius obiecti solutionem, si quis pia  
modestia, et non profana arrogantia, divinae provi-  
dentiae regimen in rebus humanis consideret. Neque  
enim sic necessario peccare dicimus impios, quin  
voluntaria deliberataque malitia peccent. Necessitas  
inde est, quod opus suum per eos Deus exsequitur, quod  
certum est ac stabile." (Corpus Ref., v.34, c.256.)



fixes the guilt of it on man and makes him liable to punishment, since his voluntary choice of evil, with the knowledge that it is evil, indicates that the chooser's character is sinful. Therefore, because he chooses sin from the love of that which is sinful, he bears the guilt of it; and guilt invariably determines punishment. The simple fact of the matter is, as Calvin is never tired of proclaiming, all men are alike slaves to sin, save as God redeems them by grace.

### 3. Exhortation.

But now, simply because only those whom God chooses to redeem can truly pursue the good, is no reason why all should not be exhorted to pursue it; since the pursuit of that which they recognize to be good is felt to be an obligation by all men, and the standard of right is not lowered to our ability, - because our 'ability' here really means nothing more than our desire, and it would surely be foolish to say that a man is never obligated to do anything more than he desires to do. There is no external prohibition in the way of our pursuing the good.

Nor is this fact of redemption depending on grace any excuse for neglecting the preaching of the Gospel

to all, as has been commanded. For the Word is to be preached that the elect may respond to it; and previous to such response, we do not know who is elected by God unto salvation, - since His means of redemption are the outward preaching of the Word and the inner impulsion of the Holy Spirit to its reception.

In connection with this doctrine of redemption by grace, it is worth remembering that Paul explicitly teaches that the requirements of the law are no measure of our ability, and that the law was given us, not as a rule of life, but as a means of bringing us to a sense of our need of Divine help. As Augustine says,

"God requires faith itself of us, and finds not what he requires, unless he has given what he finds."

"Let God give what he enjoins, and let him enjoin what he pleases." 1)

This is the conclusion of the matter as far as we are concerned. If God requires perfect goodness in us, He must give it Himself. The Good News is that He has - in Christ.

According to Calvin, God's reproach does not imply our freedom; it only implies our guilt. The only thing we are free to do is evil; because none of our abilities is good, truly and completely good.

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1)Quoted in the Institutes, Bk.II., ch.5, par.7.

The deterministic force of the doctrine of Irresistible Grace is shown in the fact that it gives us another evidence of God's invincible power and of our dependence upon Him, while at the same time it leaves unbroken the necessary connection between character and will. God does not change our wills by beating them down; He changes them by changing the heart. And the fact that He can thus change the heart and cause it to persist in a new way, only serves to show how He may indeed be the sole ultimate actor in the universe, the Determiner of all things.

## Chapter IV.

### JUSTIFICATION

#### Relation of the Doctrine to Those Preceding, and Its Further Deterministic Implications.

We have seen how Calvin contends that all things were created by God and are sustained by His eternal providence, that since the Fall man has been hopelessly lost in sin, totally depraved and unable to save himself, but that God can save him in spite of all opposition, and can make him to persevere in righteousness. And we have further seen that all these particular views contain in themselves definitely deterministic elements; and that taken together, they form what certainly approaches a deterministic system. We have now to consider how it is that God makes men righteous, and whether or not the Calvinistic view of this process is also deterministic.

The doctrine of Justification by Faith has been so famous as the corner stone of Protestant theology, ever since its promulgation by Luther, that there is no need for a lengthy discussion of it, nor for citing proof texts in the writings of Calvin to establish the fact of his adhering to it. We shall therefore merely concern ourselves with arriving at a sufficient



understanding of it to see that it is logically a consistent development of the previously considered Calvinistic doctrines.

1. Dependence on the Gospel.

In spite of the fact that that particular and special grace necessary to the salvation of men is irresistible, it does not seem to swoop down upon men in any magical fashion, but appears to be almost invariably connected with the preaching of the Christian Gospel, - a record of historical events particularly interpreted. Thus, according to the generally accepted Christian teaching, God saves men by means of certain definite events which He has decreed as part of the history of the world, - namely, the birth, life, death, and resurrection of His Son.

Now it is apparent that any view which considers these particular events absolutely necessary to salvation, is to that extent deterministic; since it is definitely beyond the power of men to order the birth, life, death, and resurrection of the Son of God as events in the history of the world. Thus the very making of salvation to depend, in part at least, upon objective historical events, instead of making it less deterministic than if it depended upon some direct Divine

influence alone, makes it equally a matter beyond our control and dependent upon the Divine Omnipotence.

But although Christianity connects salvation with specific historical occurrences, and thus makes it something more than the direct action of the Spirit of God upon the souls of individuals, it does not wholly do away with this direct action of the Spirit, but retains it as an additional necessity in connection with these happenings. For it makes the salvation of the individual to depend, not alone upon the historical incident, but upon his acceptance of it as an historical fact with a definite significance, - which is an additional deterministic touch; since apart from the Divine revelation it would be impossible for men to perceive the significance of these events in the Divine economy. In other words, the Christian Gospel is a Divinely revealed interpretation of certain Divinely ordained events, both these and the revelation of their significance being necessary to the salvation of men, and both actually existing as God's means of saving men.

The third point is that the individual is saved, according to the Christian teaching, by means of faith in this Christian interpretation of these facts. And according to Calvin, the individual cannot believe in

the Gospel without the definite impulsion of the Holy Spirit. In other words, the Gospel is rendered profitable to us by the Spirit, and faith itself is the gift of God. As Calvin says,

"It is accounted by the world exceedingly paradoxical, when it is affirmed, that no one can believe in Christ, but he to whom it is given. But this is partly for want of considering the depth and sublimity of heavenly wisdom, and the extreme dulness of man in apprehending the mysteries of God, and partly from not regarding that firm and steadfast constancy of heart, which is the principal branch of faith."<sup>1</sup>)

Events, interpretation, and belief, are all from God. Whether we look at salvation from the broad general Calvinistic principles of Original Sin, Total Depravity, and Irresistible Grace, or from the specific details of the actual process of salvation itself, we come to a deterministic view of the world in so far as God's relation to the redeemed is concerned.

## 2. Repentance.

But we have yet to consider how it is that we are justified by faith. To begin with, what takes place in the life of the individual when he accepts Christ as his Savior, believes in the Christian Gospel that Jesus is the Son of God and that through His life and death

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<sup>1</sup>) Institutes, Book III., ch.2, par.33.

all who believe on Him are redeemed?

In the first place, when one confronts Christ and acknowledges Him to be the Son of God, one immediately acquires a new and concrete standard of righteousness. And this leads to a new awareness of personal unworthiness and need, which in turn, if the heart has been affected as well as the head, leads to a grave dissatisfaction with one's life and a keen longing after righteousness, which is what is called 'repentance', a return from sin to God, a 'change of mind and intention.' According to Calvin, repentance may be defined as

"a true conversion of our life to God, proceeding from a sincere and serious fear of God, and consisting in the mortification of our flesh and of the old man, and in the vivification of the Spirit." 1)

From which it appears that, as he contends, it follows upon faith. But as faith is the gift of God, it appears that the dependence of repentance on faith makes it also, at least an indirect, gift from God.

It is even more than this, however; for as something distinct from faith, it is apparently as much a direct gift from God as the faith on which it depends. In so far as it consists of the mortification of our flesh and the vivification of the Spirit, it requires a transformation of the soul itself: and this, it would

1) Institutes, Bk. III., ch. 3, par. 5.



seem, could only be the work of Him who originally created the soul, and by whose decree it became sinful. For as Calvin remarks,

"No man ever hated sin, without having been previously captivated with the love of righteousness." 1)

And when one remembers man's bondage to sin through his love of evil, it becomes evident that this new love of righteousness and hatred of sin, which become the motivating forces of a new life, must come from God. Thus the Spirit of God so changes the mind and heart of sinful man that he is able to accept Christ in faith when he hears the Gospel, - preached to him by men motivated by the Holy Spirit to this good work, - and it is the Spirit of God which, on the occasion of faith, makes him able to repent. But the life is not only transformed so that the man is capable of faith and repentance; the Holy Spirit so moves upon his heart and mind that he actually and inevitably accepts Christ and repents. It is the process as a whole which is regeneration, and every part of it is effected by God, who must make the initial move and carry through the whole procedure to its completion.

And according to the Christian teaching, there follows upon faith and repentance, the remission of

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1)Op.cit., par.20.

sins, in which is comprised both pardon and justification. As Calvin contends,

"Repentance is preached in the name of Christ, when men are informed, by the doctrine of the gospel, that all their thoughts, their affections, and their pursuits, are corrupt and vicious; and that therefore it is necessary for them to be born again, if they wish to enter the kingdom of God. Remission of sins is preached, when men are taught that Christ is made unto them 'wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption,' (1) in whose name they are gratuitously accounted righteous and innocent in the sight of God. Both these blessings of grace --- are apprehended by faith." 1)

Thus faith in Christ as the Son of God is the forerunner of repentance, and faith in His promise of the remission of sins through His name is that which enables us to enter into the blessed state of assurance of salvation.

### 3. "All Things Work Together For Good."

Before taking up the forensic nature of justification here hinted at, it might be well for us to notice a point made by Calvin in the discussion of Christian experience which has peculiar deterministic implications, in that it brings out again rather clearly the application of the general doctrine of Providence to the case of believers, in a different way from what was done in connection with the consideration of that doctrine itself. Calvin maintains that

1) Op.cit., par. 19. (1) I Cor. 1:30.

"Believers should accustom themselves to such a contempt of the present life, as may not generate either hatred of life, or ingratitude towards God. For this life, though it is replete with innumerable miseries, is yet deservedly reckoned among the Divine blessings which must not be despised. --- To believers --- the whole of it is destined to the advancement of their salvation." 1)

Thus the contention is that no event happens in the life of a believer, or one destined to become such, except by the direction of God to the end of bringing him to a saving faith in Christ, and through that eventually to the perfection of Christian character. Consequently, however meaningless and random the events and experiences of his life may seem to a casual observer, every circumstance, according to Calvin, is carefully and definitely determined.

#### The Forensic Character of Justification.

But we must now consider the relation of faith and repentance to justification. For if justification is but the due reward of these, then it becomes in itself a matter of works and not of grace. It is Calvin's conviction, however, that we are not justified by works in any sense; either by the good works which

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1) Institutes, op.cit., ch.9, par.3.

follow upon regeration, or by faith and repentance considered as works. Even though our life is changed we are not righteous. Perfection is not an immediate acquisition, but is only to be attained by a life-long process of sanctification. Nor could the past be changed even if we should become immediately perfect. The sins of the past life are indelibly written into the record of what has been, and therefore of what is as long as time shall last. With all due reverence to the Father, neither He nor man can ever change the past and make it never to have been. Consequently, when we are justified before God and called righteous in His sight, it ~~can mean nothing more~~ than that He forgives us and declares us righteous, for some reason, when really we are not strictly so.

This, however, seems a strange procedure. Is it that God counts faith and repentance as sufficient recompense for our sinful lives? Calvin says not; because they are in no sense an equivalent. Faith, according to him, is a mere acceptance of the gifts of God - a gift itself. It is a means to our justification, but it is in no sense the ground. Nor is repentance. Forgiveness without repentance appears to be a mere condoning of sin. But sorrow for the past, and a change of heart, do not make old ways different



from what they were. We may accept God's gifts, we may be sorry for our sin, and resolve to sin no more; but neither of these things cleanses old scores. From this aspect of the problem (which is our aspect, though it may not be the ultimate one), if there is strict justice in the world, the penalty must be paid.

And so it is that we are justified by God, not on the grounds of faith and repentance, but on the grounds of the imputation of Christ's righteousness and His substitutionary death. In Calvin's words,

"Justification --- is no other than an acquittal from guilt of him who was accused, as though his innocence had been proved. Since God, therefore, justifies us through the mediation of Christ, he acquits us, not by an admission of our personal innocence, but by an imputation of righteousness; so that we, who are unrighteous in ourselves, are considered as righteous in Christ." 1)

Thus it is that our justification is most truly by grace; since God accepts for our righteousness not just some insufficient substitute which we provide (though even this substitute of faith and repentance would not be the offering of anything but God's own gifts to us, and could not be considered something of our very own which would in any sense merit such a reward), but a perfect fulfilment of the demands of the

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1) Institutes, Bk. III., ch. 11, par. 3.

law and a payment of the penalty of our guilt, which He himself provides. As Calvin maintains, such a gratuitous justification shows neither laxness on God's part, nor any harshness; but rather, manifests His righteousness more clearly: first, by showing the insufficiency of ours by comparison; second, by showing His demand for complete satisfaction; and third, by showing His perfect love and mercy in His supplying Himself this complete satisfaction.

Unable to save ourselves, we are saved by God's goodness in providing a way whereby the penalty of our sins might be paid and the righteousness of another substituted for our unrighteousness. There is nothing in the nature of the case which would require God to accept a substitute for us if such should be provided; nor is there anything in the demands of perfect justice which would preclude such an acceptance. Therefore God's decision to do this is a perfectly gratuitous one, which at the same time is in no way contrary to His perfect goodness. But He alone can provide the substitute which He has decided to accept; and as it would be unjust to provide an innocent creature to suffer for the sins of guilty ones, He must Himself be the substitute. So there is in all this a manifold

display of His grace.

God decides upon a way to save us; He provides the way; He enlightens the minds of men that they may understand it; He awakens within our minds and hearts that faith which enables us individually to accept His gift; He arouses such sorrow within us that by His direction we turn to a new life in which we are motivated by an implanted desire for the righteousness of Christ. We are gratuitously justified by the gratuitous righteousness of Christ, applied to all who possess the gratuitous mercies of faith and repentance. Thus, according to Calvin, the whole process of Justification is determined and effected by God alone; for as he says,

"The efficient cause of eternal life being procured for us (is) the mercy of our heavenly Father, and his gratuitous love towards us; --- the material cause is Christ and his obedience, by which he obtained righteousness for us; and --- the formal and instrumental cause (is) faith; --- the final cause --- the demonstration of the Divine righteousness and the praise of the Divine goodness." 1)

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1) Institutes, Book III., ch. 14, par. 17.

## Chapter V.

## PREDESTINATION

Relation to Preceding Doctrines and to Foreknowledge.

The doctrine of Predestination may be taken as the very heart of the deterministic elements in Calvinism. It is really the core of the whole system. Granted that God created the world and sustains it by His providence, that man, in accordance with God's decree, is, since the Fall, totally depraved and unable to save himself, that God's grace is irresistible, that justification is by grace, the acceptance of Christ being the result of gratuitous regeneration; we have then to discover how it is that some are selected for regeneration and others are not. And this leads us, of course, to the question of predestination. For if there is no distinction among men, and salvation is a matter of grace, and all events are in accord with the will of God, we are forced to accept predestination, whereby some are elected to eternal life and some are damned (unless of course there are none who are lost), this election and damnation depending wholly upon the secret will of God. And since God, according to the orthodox Christian theology, is omnipotent and omniscient,



all things must have been seen by Him and decreed by Him from all eternity.

Predestination, then, is simply God's providence as it relates to the destiny of individuals. In Calvin's words:

"Predestination we call the eternal decree of God, by which he has determined in himself, what he would have to become of every individual of mankind. For they are not all created with a similar destiny; but eternal life is fore-ordained for some, and eternal damnation for others." 1)

In other words, to relate this doctrine to those of Total Depravity, Irresistible Grace, and Justification, we should simply say that the preaching of the Gospel depends upon God's providence, its reception upon His election.<sup>2)</sup>

At the very outset we must make it clear that, according to Calvin, predestination does not depend at all upon foreknowledge. God has foreknowledge because

"all things have ever been, and perpetually remain, before his eyes, so that to his knowledge nothing is future or past, but all things are present; and present in such a manner, that he does not merely conceive them from ideas formed in his mind, as things remembered by us appear present to our minds, but really beholds and sees them as if actually placed before him." 3)

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1) Institutes, Book III., ch.21, par.5.

2) Ibid., par.4. 3) Ibid., par.5.

Consequently, as Calvinists have ever maintained, God's knowledge of things as actual must follow from His ordination of them; since according to the doctrines of Creation and Providence, nothing exists without His willing it to be. And the doctrines of universal Total Depravity, Irresistible Grace, and Justification by Grace, further preclude the possibility of God's basing His predestination of individuals upon any foreknowledge of how they will receive the Gospel or how they will live; for it has already been shown in these doctrines that all men are lost in sin and unable to do good, and that only those who are impelled by the Holy Spirit are able to accept Christ. Wherefore, God cannot have a foreknowledge of anybody accepting Christ and leading a righteous life, without having previously selected such a one as a recipient of His special grace. Besides, if God sees all things as present, He decrees the whole universe at one time, and to talk about election following upon foreknowledge is unmeaning.

#### The Nature of Election.

If election means anything at all it is an act of God's free choice. Otherwise, there is no such

thing as election. For if man is free to accept Christ, and God has agreed to grant eternal life to all who do, then when a man does accept Christ he has won eternal life for himself, and there is no place for any election that has any real significance.

As Calvin points out in his treatise on Predestination,<sup>1)</sup> those who with Georgius the Scicilian contend that the word 'election' is used in different senses in Scripture, are not disclosing anything new. In the Institutes<sup>2)</sup> Calvin cites at least three different kinds of election: that of the nation in Abraham and Isaac and Jacob; that of a dynasty in David; and that of individuals.

It is the last which is the real 'election', - an election of individuals to eternal life in Christ. The Hebrews were all elected to certain outward privileges and religious opportunities; but only those individually elected to eternal life availed themselves of these. As Calvin says,

"Though it is sufficiently clear, that God, in his secret counsel, freely chooses whom he will, and rejects others, his gratuitous election is but half displayed till we come to particular individuals, to whom God not only offers salvation, but assigns it in such a manner, that the certainty of the effect is liable to no suspense or doubt."<sup>3)</sup>

1) "Calvin's Calvinism", Part I., page 143.

2) Institutes, Bk. III., ch. 21, pars. 5-7. 3) Ibid., par. 7.

And he concludes:

"In conformity, therefore, to the clear doctrine of Scripture, we assert, that by an eternal and immutable counsel, God has once for all determined, both whom he would admit to salvation, and whom he would condemn to destruction. We affirm that this counsel, as far as concerns the elect, is founded on his gratuitous mercy, totally irrespective of human merit; but that to those whom he devotes to condemnation, the gate of life is closed by a just and irreprehensible, but incomprehensible, judgment. --- As God seals his elect by vocation and justification, so by excluding the reprobate from the knowledge of his name and the sanctification of his Spirit, he affords an indication of the judgment that awaits them."1)

#### Predestination and Determinism.

Now it is immediately evident that such a doctrine is thoroughly deterministic, - in spite of the difficult position with regard to the 'incomprehensible judgment' upon the condemned. When it is said that 'eternal life is is foreordained for some, and eternal damnation for others', and that 'by an eternal and immutable counsel, God has once for all determined both whom he would admit to salvation, and whom he would condemn to destruction', we have as clear a statement of determinism with regard to human life and destiny as could be found. Yet even here, in this point about 'judgment'

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1) Institutes, op.cit., par.7. (Underlining mine.)



there is a discordant note which indicates that Calvin is trying to qualify his position in such a way as to avoid the appearance of accusing God of injustice.

But granting that no injustice could be committed by God, whom Calvin speaks of as 'the Judge of the world',<sup>1)</sup> one may yet find difficulties in the way of explaining the destiny of the lost on the basis of a judgment; for this is certainly attempting to get behind the veil which Calvin is so often telling us it is impossible to penetrate, and sacrilegious to try to penetrate.<sup>2)</sup> Instead of making a statement which is dangerously near being inconsistent with our general position, to say the least, and then going no farther because of an admission of the incomprehensibility of the situation (an admission which is wholly justified), it might be wiser to admit the incomprehensibility sooner, and thus stop with the consistent assertion that God has decreed the fates of men in accordance with His own good pleasure, and without injustice. We shall, however, consider this question in more detail later.

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1) Institutes, Bk. III., ch. 23, par. 4.

2) Ibid., ch. 21, par. 7. See also "Calvin's Calvinism", Part I., p. 14; and "The Congregation", in "Calvinism by Calvin", pp. 90, 91, 93, 94, 102, - where Calvin says, "We must confess that God is just, although we cannot understand what is the reason of (reprobation). More-

The Problem of Evil.

The conclusion of the whole matter for Calvin is that there is no cause for the particular destiny of individuals apart from God's will, and that it is impossible to get behind that. He declares:

"The Divine Will --- is in fact, and is justly entitled to be, the cause of every thing that exists." 1)

But what, then, about the fate of the lost? Calvin is here very straightforward in the matter.

"Many, indeed," he remarks, "as if they wished to avert odium from God, admit election in such a way as to deny that any one is reprobated. But this is puerile and absurd, because election itself could not exist without being opposed to reprobation. God is said to separate those whom he adopts to salvation. To say that others obtain by chance, or acquire by their own efforts, that which election alone confers on a few, will be worse than absurd. Whom God passes by, therefore, he reprobates, and from no other cause than his determination to exclude them from the inheritance which he predestines for his children." 2)

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over he is not bound to account to us for it. Let us then be contented to know that all his judgments take place with equity and uprightness, and that his justice will one day be known, when we shall see him face to face."(p.102.); and again, "Let us --- learn only to adore the majesty of God, and to hold it as a settled principle, that everything that happens is wisely ordained though we see not why. This is what St. Paul shows, that we must not be wiser than the Spirit of God. --- For if we would pass beyond what he has declared in his word, we should not be good disciples in his school."(pp.93f.)

1) Institutes, Bk., III., ch.23, par.2. 2) Ibid., par.1.

And in the special treatise he holds that

"If this being 'afore prepared unto glory' is peculiar and special to the elect; it evidently follows, that the rest, the non-elect, were equally 'fitted to destruction:' because, being left to their own nature, they were thereby devoted already to certain destruction. That they were 'fitted to destruction' by their own wickedness, is an idea so silly, that it needs no notice." 1)

(We shall perhaps have occasion in a later criticism to use these words against Calvin himself; but for the present we must notice the full deterministic force of his utterances in connection with this doctrine of Predestination.)

Though it is impossible to oppose God's predestination, Calvin holds that this is no excuse for the reprobate. It is a hard doctrine, but he reminds us:

"The declaration of Solomon ought to be universally admitted, that 'the Lord hath made all things for himself; yea, even the wicked for the day of evil.' (e)" 2)

And he adds:

"All things being at God's disposal, and the decision of salvation or death belonging to him, he orders all things by his counsel and decree in such a manner, that some men are born devoted from the womb to certain death, that his name may be glorified in their destruction." 3)

How their death glorifies God is a point not made clear; but one need not on that account simply scoff

1)"Calvin's Calvinism", Part I., p.60.

2)and 3)Institutes, Bk. III., ch. 23, par. 6. (e) Prov. 16:4.

at the doctrine, for the problem still remains that some men apparently do go down to destruction in world created and governed by an omnipotent God.

There is no use smoothing over the difficulties and accepting some easy solution which merely fails to notice them. Nor can one get over the obstacles by the schoolmen's device of contending that God simply foreknows the destruction of men but does not will it. We have already hinted at the inadequacy of this.

Calvin is perfectly willing to admit that

"mere foreknowledge lays no necessity on the creatures";

but as Valla points out, controversy on this point is wholly unnecessary,

"because both life and death are acts of God's will, rather than of his foreknowledge."

God does not simply foreknow the existence of men; He creates them! As Calvin says,

"If God simply foresaw the fates of men, and did not also dispose and fix them by his determination, there would be room to agitate the question, whether his providence or foresight rendered them at all necessary. But since he foresees future events only in consequence of his decree that they shall happen, it is useless to contend about foreknowledge, while it is evident that all things come to pass rather by ordination and decree."<sup>1)</sup>

It does seem that foreknowledge without predestination

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<sup>1)</sup>Institutes, op.cit., par.6.



is an absolute impossibility, since if the Creator is omniscient, the very act of creating is a predestination.

But what, then, about Adam and the Fall? Calvin takes a most deterministic stand on the question when he says,

"I inquire again, how it came to pass that the fall of Adam, independent of any remedy, should involve so many nations with their infant children in eternal death, but because such was the will of God. --- It is an awful decree, I confess; but no one can deny that God foreknew the future fate of man before he created him, and that he did foreknow it because it was appointed by his own decree. --- Nor should it be thought absurd to affirm, that God not only foresaw the fall of the first man, and the ruin of his posterity in him, but also arranged all by the determination of his own will. For as it belongs to his wisdom to foreknow every thing future, so it belongs to his power to rule and govern all things by his hand." 1)

And of those foolish people who are continually insisting 'that God permits the destruction of the impious, but does not will it', Calvin very properly asks:

"But what reason shall we assign for his permitting it, but because it is his will?" 2)

We shall see later, perhaps, that Calvin is not always consistent with himself on these matters; but it does seem that the Calvinistic doctrine of eternal election does involve its counterpart, that most

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1) Institutes, op.cit., par.7. 2) Ibid., par.8.

1)  
unpopular doctrine of reprobation. And Calvin here  
does not shrink from the full force of ~~the~~ implications  
of his position, for he maintains:

"That the reprobate obey not the word of  
God, when made known to them, is justly  
imputed to the wickedness and depravity  
of their hearts, provided it be at the same  
time stated, that they are abandoned to  
this depravity because they have been raised  
up, by the just but inscrutable judgment of  
God, to display his glory in their condem-  
nation." 2)

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1) Now it may be, as Professor Mackintosh has suggested,  
that the word 'reprobate' in the New Testament is not  
used to refer to this pre-ordained and antecedent  
rejection; yet it does most certainly appear that if  
we grant that grace is irresistible and that justifi-  
cation is only by grace, then those who are saved, are  
saved by God's election, and if there be any lost,  
they are lost because of His rejection. And if God  
has known all things from all eternity, this election  
and rejection have been from all eternity. It is just  
as Calvin says:

"This is the point we must remember with  
regard to the reprobate, that God reprobates  
them inasmuch as they are not chosen and  
elected." ("Calvinism by Calvin", p. 102.)

It may be that there are no lost; all may be elected  
and come to a saving faith in Christ. But this does  
not alter the case. It would still be exactly as Calvin  
has said. He thought there were individuals who were  
lost. If he were mistaken in this, he would still be  
right in his contention that reprobation is ultimately  
mere failure to be chosen. The fact that all are  
chosen simply indicates that there are none in the  
state of reprobation; it does not change the conditions  
of that state. If one is to disagree with Calvinism  
here, the disagreement must start farther back; it is  
the whole Calvinistic system which must be rejected.

2) Institutes, Book III., ch. 24, par. 14.

If emphasis is placed here upon the fact of 'their being raised up' for this purpose, we have a most consistently deterministic assertion, and one in complete harmony with the main trend of Calvin's theology. But it is very clear that if they 'have been raised up' by God for this purpose, the idea of 'judgment' cannot refer to any judicial disapproval of them, since they do not even exist at the time the decision of their fate is made. It may very well be that 'they are raised up' for condemnation, because the condemnation of the wicked will somehow redound to the glory of God, and it is for this that they have been created. But if it is so, it must be admitted that the whole matter is a mystery to us. Not that the reason for their creation and condemnation is a mystery, as Calvin seems to suppose; for this has been clearly stated to be the Divine glory. The mystery is just how this procedure, under the circumstances, does redound to the Divine glory. Yet the testimony of Scripture and of the observed facts in the world, should prevent anyone who believes in God from being too quick to ridicule the Calvinistic conclusion.

The end of the matter for Calvin is simply that God is not obligated to show mercy to all, and

evidently He does not. As Augustine points out,<sup>1)</sup> perhaps  
we get at the real solution of the difficulty by asking  
with Paul,<sup>2)</sup>

"Who art thou, O man, that repliest  
against God?"

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1) See "Calvin's Calvinism", Part I., pp. 14, 53f.  
2) Romans 9:20.



## Part II.

ITS CONSEQUENCES IN OTHER DOCTRINES.

## Chapter VI.

## SANCTIFICATION AND PRAYER.

Sanctification Dependent on God and Subsequent to  
Regeneration.

It might appear that the doctrines of Predestination and Justification by imputed righteousness did away with all necessity for good works. But anyone who thinks so has quite misunderstood the orthodox position. Good works are still a necessary part of the Christian life, - not that we are elected or justified because of them, but because they are the natural outgrowth of regeneration. No man can claim to be redeemed unless his life manifests the power of redemption in his conduct. Ultimately the Christian is saved by being made righteous, and if he is not made righteous it is simply a sign that he has never been redeemed.

But the point for us to note is that all Christian righteousness comes from the regeneration of the Holy Spirit, and that all our good works are from God. According to Calvin,

"It is beyond a doubt, that whatever is laudable in our works proceeds from the grace of God; and that we cannot properly ascribe the least portion of it to ourselves. If we truly and/

# SANCTIFICATION.

"seriously acknowledge this truth, not only all confidence, but likewise all idea of merit, immediately vanishes. We do not, like the sophists, divide the praise of good works between God and man, but we preserve it to the Lord complete, entire, and uncontaminated. --- Good works, therefore, are pleasing to God, and not unprofitable to the authors of them; and they will moreover receive the most ample blessings from God as their reward; not because they merit them, but because the Divine goodness has freely appointed them this reward." 1)

And with regard to the matter of justification he specifically says,

"We do not justify men by works before God; but we say, that all who are of God are regenerated and made new creatures, that they may depart from the kingdom of sin into the kingdom of righteousness; and that by this testimony they ascertain their vocation, (y) and, like trees, are judged by their fruits." 2)

The position is simply that,

"We are justified, not without works, yet not by works; since union with Christ, by which we are justified, contains sanctification as well as righteousness." 3)

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1) Institutes, Book III, ch. 15, par. 3. See further "De Libero Arbitrio" (p. 35), where Calvin presents the same view: "Dicimus hominem non modo nihil agere posse boni, sed ne cogitare quidem, ut totus a Deo pendere discat, ac de ~~se~~ desperans, in illum penitus se reicere: si quid boni egerit, illi acceptum, non sibi referat; ned dimidian tantum illi laudem tribuat bonorum operum, sed plenam ac solidam, nihil sibi reliquum faciens, nisi quod ab eo accepit, quidquid habet." (Corpus Ref. Vol. 34, c. 257). 2) Ibid., par. 8. (y) 2. Peter 1:10. 3) Ibid., ch. 16, par. 1. See also the "Congregation"-

# SANCTIFICATION.

God imparts the ability to perform good works, and then rewards them as though they were our own. Yet, as we have seen, one must not suppose that the regenerated individual is immediately perfect. The process of sanctification is a life-long one, beginning at the time of regeneration and progressing through the rest of our lives on this earth, culminating only hereafter in the perfect likeness of Christ. According to Calvin the Scripture

"beside prohibiting us to glory in works, because they are the gratuitous gifts of God, --- likewise teaches us that they are always defiled by some pollutions." 1)

Consequently we cannot conclude from any Biblical promises of rewards for goodness that we are in any sense justified by works.

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 "Calvinism by Calvin", pp. 91 and 92, where Calvin declares with regard to God's election, that "when he has elected us it is to this end that 'we should be holy'", and that if we grow lax on the assumption of our election, it is simply an indication that we are not elected after all.

1) Ibid. ch. 18, par. 5.

## PRAYER.

Regeneration, faith, repentance, justification, sanctification, all are from God, and according to Calvin none depends in any degree upon our free will. 1)

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1) It is very interesting to note in connection with the Calvinistic emphasis of complete dependence on God, even for good works, that as Prof. Kuijper points out, Calvinism has not resulted in any moral laxness of the individual. On the contrary, as he remarks,

"The first thing that attracts our attention is the apparent contradiction between a confession, which, it is alleged, blunts the edge of moral incentives, and a practice, which, in moral earnestness exceeds the practice of all other religions. --- Romanists, Lutherans, Arminians and Libertines have ever charged against Calvinism that its absolute doctrine of predestination, culminating in the perseverance of saints, must necessarily result in a too easy conscience and a dangerous laxity of morals. But Calvinism answers this charge, not by opposing reasoning against reasoning, but by putting a fact of world-wide reputation over against this false deduction of fictitious consequences." ("Calvinism," pp. 84, 85).

Calvinism does not consider good works the means to salvation, but with its constant regard for logical sequence, it very rightly considers them the inevitable consequence of a true regeneration. Unlike some other systems of theology, it is not so much concerned with doing good as with being good. And thus while stressing the Law, it has avoided a Pharisaic confidence in the worth of its obedience. It has ever withstood all attempts to lower the standards of God, simply because it has never considered morality the means to redemption but the consequence.



## PRAYER.

The Problem of Prayer.

We come now to that most difficult problem of prayer. How can the Calvinist possibly believe in its efficacy? If God in His providence determines all events by an eternal decree, why should one ever be so foolish as to ask Him for anything? Calvin, I think, does not answer this question specifically. In fact it probably never even occurred to him, because he seems never to have been quite aware of the completely deterministic implications of his teaching, - as he continues to use indeterministic language and in the chapter on prayer combines in several places deterministic and indeterministic expressions in the same sentence.<sup>1)</sup> But the question must be answered, for it is clearly the teaching of Christ that we should pray to the Father and that He hears and answers prayer. And this, moreover is the teaching of Calvin as well.

The Calvinistic answer must simply be that a man prays to God because he cannot help it. Prayers, like

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1) Institutes, Book III, ch. 20, pars. 41 - 44.

## PRAYER.

all things else, are determined by Him who made us and prompts our every word and act. And they are in no sense foolishness, because they are most efficacious second causes. <sup>1)</sup> When we ask God for something which He has already planned to give us, our prayer is not useless; because God has also decreed this prayer as a means to the end, so that while the prayer and the gift are all of a piece, the gift depends upon the prayer and is an answer to it. And when we ask God for something which He has determined not to give us, this, too, is a procedure decreed by Him, and signifies not that the prayer is of no avail, but that it is best for us not to receive that for which we ask, but to ask and be disappointed in our asking, - which any sensible person will recognize as in many cases a most beneficial experience.

What Calvin does have to say about prayer is that

"We ought to remember this passage in John: 'This is the confidence that we have in Him, that, if we ask anything according to His will, He heareth us.' (h) But as our abilities are very unequal to such great perfection, we must seek some remedy to relieve us. As the attention of the mind ought to be fixed on God, so it is necessary that it should be followed by the affection of the heart. But they both remain far below this elevation; or rather, to speak more consistently with the truth, they grow weary and fail in the ascent, or are carried to contrary course. Therefore, to assist this imbecility, God gives us the Spirit, to be the director of our prayers, to suggest what is right, and to regulate our affections. For the Spirit helpeth our infirmities; for we know not what we should pray for

1) See "Compendium of The Summa Theologica," Ch. 23 (p.65)

## PRAYER.

"as we ought; but the Spirit itself maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered." (i) --- The ability of praying rightly is a peculiar gift." 1)  
 "God promises that he will be near to all who call upon Him in truth, and declares He will be found by those who seek Him with their whole heart. But to this, persons pleased with their own impurity never aspire. Legitimate prayer, therefore, requires repentance. --- Whence it follows that none pray aright, and that no others are heard, but the sincere worshippers of God." 2)

Wherefore it appears that according to the Calvinistic teaching acceptable prayers are directed by the Holy Spirit and that the ability to pray effectively is the gift of God and depends upon His previous gift of repentance. Which is in accordance with what we have said above would have to be the Calvinistic answer to the question one would naturally ask in view of the deterministic implications of Calvinism.

But now Calvin adds,

"that the inspiration of the Spirit operates in the formation of our prayers, so as not in the least to impede or retard our own exertions." 3)

By which he means that we must apply ourselves diligently to prayer, seeking the guidance of the Holy Spirit in the formulating of our petitions, but not being tempted

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 h) 1 John 5 : 14. i) Rom. 8 : 26. 1) Institutes, op. cit., par. 5. 2) Institutes, op. cit., par. 7. 3) Institutes, op. cit., Par. 5.

## PRAYER.

to adopt any fatalistic attitude of indifference, as though we expected the Holy Spirit to do the work altogether<sup>apart</sup>/from us, instead of in and through us.

It must be admitted that Calvin does not present a thoroughly worked out view of prayer here; for he urges us to implore the assistance of the Spirit. But according to his previous assertions how can we do this effectively unless the Spirit is already guiding us? The answer is that we cannot, but that God desires that we shall ask for the Spirit and by means of the Spirit impels us to that end, and then through the Spirit forms those prayers of our hearts which are pleasing to Him and which secure for us the blessings He desires to bestow upon us. For Calvin later affirms that God,

"according to His incomprehensible designs, --- so regulates the events of things, that the prayers of the saints, which contain a mixture of faith and error, are not in vain." 1)

Thus it appears that our prayers, like all our other works, fail of perfection, and yet in God's good providence are answered by Him in accordance with His plan for our well-being. Even the prayers of unbelievers are affirmatively answered by God when they accord with His desires. And since they, as well as the prayers of

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1) Institutes, op. cit., par. 15



## PRAYER.

believers, are decreed by God, they inevitably are answered in some fashion, by the events which follow upon them.

The conclusion of the whole matter, it would seem, is that according to Calvinism prayer, (all prayer - that which apparently is not answered, as well as that which obviously is), like everything else, is decreed by God; but since we have no means of knowing God's secret will we should try to obey His revealed commands and teachings with regard to prayer, as with regard to all other conduct. And Calvin being more concerned with Christian living than with Christian philosophy is at greater pains to set forth our obligation to pray and the rules which should guide us, than to work out a deterministic explanation of this obligation and these rules. Nevertheless, it seems clear that his view of the part played by the Holy Spirit, the necessity of repentance, and God's regulation of events so that the prayers of saints, though not perfect, are yet not in vain, is distinctly deterministic.

Good works, then, and prayers, like all things else, appear in the Calvinistic scheme to be determined by God and to fit into an eternally decreed order of events.

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## Chapter VII.

## THE CHURCH AND THE STATE.

The Church God's Instrument for the Salvation  
of the Elect.

Calvin must necessarily consider the Church in relation to his doctrine of Predestination, since according to him the salvation of men is inevitably accomplished through faith in Christ and this is in turn dependent upon the preaching of the Word. For it is his contention that

"it is God who inspires us with faith, but it is through the instrumentality of the gospel, according to the declaration of Paul, 'that faith cometh by hearing.' (q)" 1)

And in his view the Church is simply that institution which provides for the preaching of the Gospel, and the nurturing of believers by means of the two sacraments of baptism and the Lord's Supper. And as this office of preaching and these two sacraments are clearly commanded by Christ, Calvin, therefore, very consistently considers the Church as God's foreordained means of salvation for believers. He says,

"We see that though God could easily make his people perfect in a single moment, yet it was not his will that they should grow to mature age, but under the education of the Church. --- Hence it follows,

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 q) Rom. 10 : 17. 1) Institutes, Book IV, ch. 1, par. 5

## THE CHURCH.

"that all who reject the spiritual food for their souls, which is extended to them by the hands of the Church, deserve to perish with hunger and want." 1)

Thus we see that the true Church is not something which just grows up in accordance with the will of men, merely as an institution which serves their purpose, but is a Divinely appointed institution to accomplish a Divinely appointed task, that of saving the elect, by means of bringing them that Gospel which they are to accept in faith, and nurturing this faith by the two Christian sacraments.

It is interesting to note that Calvin strongly contends for the fact that the 'power of the keys' has indeed been given to the Church, but that this power is principally exercised in the preaching of the Gospel and the administering of the Sacraments. 2)

In accordance with a Calvinistic view one might say that the Church of Rome is simply a corruption of the true Apostolic Church, which must be accounted for, not by reference to Predestination, but by reference to that all wise Providence of God, which in the last analysis accounts for the existence of evil as well as good in the world;

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1) Op. cit., par. 5..

2) Ibid., par. 22.

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even though the corruption of the Roman Church is the corruption of sinful men.

According to Calvin, the permanent officers in the Church are only three: pastors, teachers, and deacons. It is the duty of the pastors, elders, bishops, ministers, (all these names refer to the same office) to rule over the Church, to preach the Gospel, and to administer the sacraments. The teachers

"have no official concern with the discipline, or the administration of the sacraments, or with admonitions and exhortations, but only with the interpretation of the Scripture, that pure and sound doctrine may be retained among believers." 1)

The deacons are those who look after the funds of the Church and care for the poor. No man is to assume one of these offices without being called to it by the members of the particular congregation which he serves; but - and this is what is important for a consideration of the deterministic teaching of Calvinism - the pastor must also be conscious of a call from God. 2) These offices, which date from New Testament times, are those which are sufficient for all time, and the form of ordination found in the example and precept of the apostles is that

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1) Ibid., ch. 3, par. 4. 2) Op. cit., par. 13.



## THE CHURCH.

which should be kept inviolate.

Therefore we see that, according to Calvin, God foreordained the Church for an especial purpose connected with His eternal election of some to eternal life; that its form is prescribed in God's word; that its chief officers, the pastors, are Divinely called to their appointed tasks. Thus his whole view of the Church is one consistent throughout with the deterministic tendency dominant in his major doctrines.

### Calvin's Fatalistic Teaching with regard to the State.

Just as the Church is a Divinely ordained institution connected with God's eternal predestination, so the State is a Divinely ordained institution connected with God's providential governing of the world. Calvin follows Paul in the contention that all rulers are God's agents, - in spite of the fact that they do not always recognize their responsibility as such. 1) He further elaborates the position by maintaining that just rulers are God's blessing upon an obedient people, and that unjust ones are His punishment for a people's iniquity. 2)

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1) Institutes, Book IV., ch. 20, pars. 4 - 7.      2)  
Ibid., par. 25.

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All of which is thoroughly deterministic, and quite in line with the doctrine of Providence. No man can be a ruler except by God's appointment; and all governments are, in one sense, established by God.

But Calvin's conclusions from this are for the most part entirely beside the point, and he is wholly mistaken in supposing that because all rulers are appointed by Divine providence, rebellion is in the nature of revolt against God. Where he really makes the first mistake is in assuming that all rulers are especially appointed, in some more particular way than other things are decreed, that they are actually God's vicegerents. If this were the case there would be no distinction between a good ruler and a bad one; both would be alike Divine representatives. A corrupt government and a wicked king may be appointed by God; but if so, they are appointed just as an earthquake is, or a plague. And this is not to say that men may not legitimately do their best to withstand the tempest and the earthquake, and try to stamp out the plague. It is perfectly true that there must be respect for legally constituted authority, and that in the changing of governments care must be exercised to avoid anarchy, by setting up some new government to take the place of the old, and that, really, the right to do this rests not with a few but with the people as a

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whole. Moreover, while it may be perfectly legitimate to try to improve the government, - is, as a matter of fact, even a Christian obligation, - yet one is never justified in disobeying the laws of his government except in allegiance to the higher laws of God as these are expressed in His Word. And this last is an exception which Calvin acknowledges. 1) He furthermore recognizes the right of the representatives of the people, where they have any representatives, to withstand the tyranny of kings who have no regard for the true welfare of their subjects. Where there is no such representation already existing, Calvin seems to have no suggestion for acquiring it or for improving the government in any way save at the volition of the ruler; because while he advocates disobedience when the command of the ruler is contrary to the commands of God, this is a mere passive resistance and the recognition of it is no warrant for active opposition.

Probably one must understand Calvin's firm denial of the right of a private person to attempt the overthrow of the existing government, as a very legitimate opposition to

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1) Op. cit., par. 32.

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individuals, apart from the concerted activity of the people as a whole, trying to tear down the existing order and set up one more in accord with their own personal ideas of what it should be. And in this he is absolutely right. From this, however, one must not suppose that all revolution and reform is contrary to the will of God; for the bloodiest revolution in history has been just as much the will of God as the corrupt government which it has overthrown, - since otherwise it could never have occurred.

Among the forms of government Calvin favours a combination of aristocracy and democracy, and he has a very high ideal of what a magistrate should be and do, and of the nature and purpose of the laws. The end of government is justice and equity, - a very democratic ideal. But if the government is not ideal, the duty of the private citizen is still to obey its commands, except in the case of the above mentioned conflict with the commands of the Sovereign of all men, whom the rulers themselves are obligated to obey, because He disposes of all kingdoms and appoints all kings.

One cannot help feeling that the exception Calvin points out and his provision for the representatives of the people withstanding the injustice of tyrants, are, and have been in the history since his day, more



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important for the securing of righteous government than his insistence upon obedience and acquiescence before wicked rulers. For the doctrine that God disposes all kingdoms and appoints all kings settles nothing; since the means God has generally used for the overthrow of corrupt governments is the activity of some man, or group of men, who were convinced that the existing government was not in accord with God's revealed will, however much it might be appointed by His secret providence. God's providential appointment of kings cannot be taken as establishing the authority of the existing order, because similarly in God's providence individuals overthrow kingdoms; and one does not feel very firmly convinced that Calvin's attempts to establish all governments from the Scriptural passages which indicate that certain kings were more definitely appointed by God for a more or less clearly revealed purpose, is exactly satisfactory, - because the more definite appointment of these particular kings was connected with this clearly revealed and quite specific purpose: so that to argue from these cases to all governments is simply to overlook the important point that these cases were distinguished in two particular

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features which do not characterize every government, - namely, the fact that the appointment was revealed in the Scriptures, not necessarily as a general rule for all time, but as a particular instance, and secondly, the fact that the purpose of such a special appointment was likewise revealed.

If it were otherwise, Calvin's instance of the conquest of Nebuchadnezzar would serve very well to indicate that people should always submit to powerful aggression, because it is the will of God. Calvin says,

"To whomsoever, therefore, a kingdom shall evidently be given, we have no room to doubt that subjection is due to him." 1)

And all this he bases upon the Lord's command in Jeremiah, 27 : 6 and 12 -

"I have given these lands to Nebuchadnezzar; therefore serve him and live."

Which clearly indicates that what Calvin means is that once we have assured ourselves that the authority is given by God, then our obligation is to submit and obey. But that is just the difficulty: how are we to know whether God has given the rule to a foreign aggressor or not? Apart from a specific revelation, - the days of which are, according to Calvin, passed, since New Testament times, -

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1) Institutes, op. cit., par. 28.

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there is no way of telling except to oppose the invader with all one's force and let the issue decide the matter. And similarly how is one to know that a government is the government of God, unless it is a good government? Granted that individuals alone are not the ones to say about this, and are not to take it upon themselves to assassinate rulers on their individual initiative, this is not to say that the people themselves are not to overthrow a government, whenever they feel that it is an intolerably bad government.

But the very fact that Calvin recognizes the obligation of a Christian to disobey the command of his earthly sovereign when he feels that this is contrary to the command of God, indicates that it is distinctly possible for a government to be in opposition to the revealed will of God; and in this case it surely is not apparent that the ruler governs as God's vicegerent or that the government has God's special sanction even as a punishment for the sins of the people, since there is no evidence of this redeeming punitive character manifest in the one observed fact that the commands of the ruler are contrary to the commands of God. If the ruler commands

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the people to do things contrary to God's revealed will, the only conclusion we can draw is that however much this government may be ordained by God's secret providence, it derives no special sanction from Him and there is consequently no reason on this score for opposing the overthrow of it. Calvin's conclusion that the representatives of the people may oppose the ruler when he is not governing for the true well-being of the people, does not seem to go very well with the conclusion he draws from this instance of Israel's subjection to Nebuchadnezzar: since in this special case it was the people as a whole who were commanded by God to submit to Nebuchadnezzar and there is no recognition at all of their concerted right to oppose this foreign invader even though apart from this special revelation they could not but feel that he had no intention of considering their welfare but was wholly concerned with the extension of his own domains. Apart from God's special revelation that they should submit to Nebuchadnezzar, the princes and elders of Israel had no means of telling that it was best for them to submit, save their own judgment; and seemingly it was only Jeremiah who did consider it best to submit, and he was the



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one who had God's special revelation on the particular point. So it seems preposterous for Calvin to urge this as a general rule for submission, when it is only saved by its specific peculiarities from being in direct opposition to his statement with regard to the rights and duties of the guardians of the people's liberties. Besides, Nebuchadnezzar was not the king of Israel, but of Babylon. What indication, then, could there possibly be that Israelites should submit to him, unless God gave them a special revelation for the particular case, or unless they were unable to withstand Nebuchadnezzar's power. If one is to take this incident from Israel's history as being indicative of God's will for every similar situation, it is difficult to justify resistance against any powerful foreign invader, and we should strongly censure the Allies for resisting the Kaiser in the late war. Fortunately for the common people of the world, Scripture has not always been so interpreted.

We know that Calvin's emphasis upon obedience is due to the conditions of the time in which he was writing and had regard to the practical needs of the people to whom he was writing. An advocate of reform, he felt the need of impressing Europe and especially the King of France and the German Protestant princes with the fact that he

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was not an instigator of sedition and an abetter of  
 revolt.<sup>1)</sup> In any case, his condemnation of anarchy  
 is wholly justified, and was in all probability quite  
 a beneficial note in the turbulent times of the Reform-  
 ation, when the need was for the strengthening of  
 personal religion as a preparation and safe foundation  
 for later political reform.

However, one cannot help observing that regardless  
 of the practical import of his teaching, Calvin has not  
 worked out clearly the theory of his political ideals,  
 simply because he fails to distinguish definitely between  
 God's secret providence and His revealed precepts for  
 the moral life of men. The latter alone can be man's  
 guide, and only a government's accord with the moral  
 law can make its overthrow a definite crime against  
 the governance of God. To sanction all government as  
 being in the same way the government of the vicegerents  
 of God, is to turn Providence into Fate, and to advocate  
 blind resignation to things as they are in place of  
 intelligent obedience to a Universal Moral Governor.  
 The only thing which saves Calvin from such an incon-  
 sistent identification of his system with a previously

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 1) See Translator's Preface to Allen's translation of  
 the Institutes, and Calvin's dedication Francis of France.

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denied Fatalism, is his insistence upon the obligation of opposition to the commands of the earthly ruler when these are felt to be contrary to the commands of God and his admission that properly constituted representatives of the people can on occasion of misgovernment legitimately resist the oppression of the ruler. But one cannot help seeing that the exceptions destroy the basic principle of the rule itself, and that, actually, Calvin is entirely mistaken in supposing that obedience to all earthly rulers regardless of their character and qualifications to rule is obligatory from the consideration that they rule by God's decree. They do rule by God's decree; but if they should ever be overthrown, that would be by God's decree as well, and the overthrow would therefore be as legitimate as the rule. When Calvin says,

"If we have this constantly present to our eyes and impressed upon our hearts, that the most iniquitous kings are placed on their thrones by the same decree by which the authority of all kings is established, those seditious thoughts will never enter our minds, that a king is to be treated according to his merits, and that it is not reasonable for us to be subject to a king who does not on his part perform towards us those duties which his office requires," 1)

he is simply blocking the way to all political progress

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1) Institutes, op. cit., par. 27.

## THE STATE.

and undermining the grounds of his later assertion:

"I am so far from prohibiting them (the representatives of the people), in the discharge of their duty, to oppose the violence or cruelty of kings, that I affirm, that if they connive at kings in their oppression of their people, such forbearance involves the most nefarious perfidy, because they fraudulently betray the liberty of the people, of which they know that they have been appointed protectors by the ordination of God." 1)

For if it is a crime against God to think seditious thoughts, and this is surely Calvin's implication, then it is a crime for the representatives of the people to oppose their king, and if a people have no representatives to protect their liberty, how are they to get any? Calvin admits that their liberty should be protected - at least in cases where they have representatives. But if it is a good thing for their liberty to be protected, it is a good thing for other people to acquire some to protect, - provided, of course, they are capable of properly exerting it. Certainly it is well for any people to become capable of self-government.

But Calvin makes no provision for improvement! Whatever kind of government one has is the kind God gave him, and it can never legitimately be changed in our time except by the ruler! - or by the hostile ruler

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1) Opuscit., par. 31.



## THE STATE.

of another country! Kings can do whatever they please - so long as they do not command people to worship any other God than Jehovah, or do something equally in the realm of religion. If they want to be cruel, immoral, veritable devils, no one is to say them nay - unless there are already officially appointed magistrates for the purpose, and the rights of the king are "set down in black and white." Of course God will punish them. But this will most likely only occur in the next life and will do the people no good at the present. Or God may send another king to defeat this king; for it would seem one must be of royal blood to be God's delegate in our day, - though Calvin admits that God used lesser men in Biblical times. And this conquering king will, of course, in all probability be even harder on the conquered people than their own king was. And so the condition of the people becomes worse and worse, and the worse it becomes the less possibility there is of improving it. The only hope of a people is that God will send them a wise and good king, who will voluntarily limit his own authority and allow the people some constitutional liberties and some official representatives to safeguard them. Thus as far as the

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people themselves are concerned, the scheme is wholly Fatalistic. They can do nothing to help themselves. But one cannot help asking: Are kings a different order of being from other men? Why should they not be treated according to their merits? Are they to steal and murder with impunity? Is one man to oppress and destroy a whole people, and these very people say 'Amen! God save the King!?' Can God only reform the world by kings? How do constitutional liberties arise save through the demands of the people?

Calvin himself admits that

"The vice or imperfection of men --- renders it safer and more tolerable for the government to be in the hands of many, that they may afford each other mutual assistance and admonition, and that if anyone arrogate to himself more than is right, the many may act as censors and masters to restrain his ambition", ... "because it very rarely happens that kings regulate themselves so that their will is never at variance with justice and rectitude; or, in the next place, that they are endued with such penetration and prudence, as in all cases to discover what is best." 1)

And with regard to the preferableness of the government of the many, he goes on to say,

" This has always been proved by experience, and the Lord confirmed it by his authority, when he established a government of this kind among the people of Israel, with a view to preserve them

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1) Institutes, op. cit., par. 8

## THE STATE.

"in the most desirable condition, till he exhibited in David a type of Christ. And as I readily acknowledge that no kind of government is more happy than this, where liberty is regulated with becoming moderation, and properly established on a durable basis, so also I consider those as the most happy people, who are permitted to enjoy such a condition; and if they exert their strenuous and constant efforts for its preservation and retention, I admit that they act in perfect consistence with their duty. And to this object the magistrates likewise ought to apply their greatest diligence, that they suffer not the liberty, of which they are constituted guardians, to be in any respect diminished, much less to be violated: if they are inactive and unconcerned about this, they are perfidious to their office, and traitors to their country. But if those, to whom the will of God has assigned another form of government, transfer this to themselves so as to be tempted to desire a revolution, the very thought will be not only foolish and useless, but altogether criminal. If we limit not our views to one city, but look round and take a comprehensive survey of the whole world, or at least extend our observations to distant lands, we shall certainly find it to be a wise arrangement of Divine Providence that various countries are governed by different forms of civil polity; for they are admirably held together with a certain inequality, as the elements are combined in very unequal proportions. All these remarks, however, will be unnecessary to those who are satisfied with the will of the Lord. For if it be his pleasure to appoint kings over kingdoms, and senators or other magistrates over free cities, it is our duty to be obedient to any governors whom God has established over the places in which we reside." 1)

Which last is nothing more than Fatalism and considers the world as completely stationary. It overlooks

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1) Op. cit., par. 8.

## THE STATE.

entirely the fact that in most places where they have senators and free cities they have had to fight for them. Even a good king cannot give a nation a constitutional government unless the people desire one and are willing to assume responsibilities. And history has rather firmly established the fact that Divine Providence is not at all averse to revolution! Calvin seems to overlook the fact that there may be such a thing as a political ideal towards which it is the duty of all nations to be working, - though he himself has a political ideal. He talks as if the only way of realizing it was for God to let it down from heaven.

His view here recognizes no difference as far as the obligation of the people is concerned between a benevolent despotism and a most vile and cruel tyranny. Now we need not deny the fact that there are some nations for whom in the present state of their culture a benevolent despotism is the very best form of government. But this is not to say that there is no difference between a good government and a bad one and, that if a people is so unfortunate as to have a bad one, nobody is morally obligated to try and secure them a good one. The distinction between good and bad, as in all other realms



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is a difficult one, and people are liable to make mistakes; but the obligation to seek the best is no less incumbent in political matters than in other realms and toleration of evil is no more a virtue here than elsewhere. ¶ Calvin's teaching with regard to government is undoubtedly deterministic; but he here confuses Determinism with Fatalism, and on that account makes the whole view appear puerile in the extreme. The position which his main thesis of God's Sovereignty would logically force him to adopt would not necessarily suffer from such contentions as he makes. The thing he fails to see is that because things are so, it does not follow that they must rightly remain so unless a king changes them. Kings are not a different order of being; God makes kings out of plain men, and He has even been known to overthrow them by means of the uprising of other plain men inspired by righteous indignation at the king's infringement of the common laws of humanity; and Calvin himself indicates some awareness of this in his admission of the fact that God had on occasion used mere men to overthrow the power of kingdoms, e.g. as in the case of Moses.<sup>1)</sup> But he contends that these men only acted righteously when they acted at God's direct command;

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1) Institutes, op. cit., par. 30

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and since the days of direct revelation are past this can furnish no example for the present. However, the truth still remains that if God is to reform the world, He must reform it by men; and one need not agree with Calvin that God is principally limited to the use of kings as His instruments of reformation.

This much, though, should be said for Calvin: he was living before the rise of modern democratic sentiments, and before such a general acceptance and application of them as exists in our own day, - and he did a great deal by recognizing the superiority of conscience even over kings to bring about the condition which now exists. He himself was an instrument of Divine Providence to overthrow kingdoms, though he was not himself a king, and his influence was exerted not on kings who willingly surrendered their powers to their subjects, but on the people who demanded privileges from their kings.

But this is not a treatise on political theory, and we should not spend so much time in criticising the insufficiency and inexhaustiveness of Calvin's political views, were it not for the fact that their lack of soundness is due ultimately to his failure clearly to distinguish between two different conceptions of God and the universe, and to combine them consistently.

Note on the actual social, economic, and political  
effects of Calvinism.

In a consideration of Calvin's political teachings, it must be born in mind that, as Professor W.P. Paterson has remarked, Calvin was always trying to safeguard himself against three accusations of his opponents: first, that his theology left no place for the Christian sacraments; second, that it left no place for individual moral responsibility; and third, that it was subversive of all stability of government and would lead to political revolution. Now Calvin was perfectly right in defending himself against these false attacks upon his theories and their consequences. But in his defence against the third, he overstepped the mark, and put himself in the position of opposing not only anarchy, but all progress or improvement in political affairs. Fortunately, however, his followers evidently disregarded the extreme part of Calvin's political theory, and accepting his theological position, allowed it to have its own consequences. Many of Calvin's own social, economic, and political pronouncements were revolutionary, and his whole system of thought was so different from that which was responsible for world conditions in his day that wherever his theology was accepted it could not help being conducive to a new order. From a consideration of the political injunctions in the Institutes, one might suppose that Calvin's influence in this realm would have been wholly conservative; but subsequent history has not proved it to be so.

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One must not forget that Calvin, in spite of his less consistent admonitions, gave expression in his recognition of the merits of representative government, the personal fallibility of kings, and the high responsibility of magistrates,<sup>1)</sup> to what may be considered as practically a political ideal. At any rate the ideal of Calvinists has not been mere acquiescence in conditions as they are,<sup>and</sup> politically the influence of Calvinism has generally been toward the development of Democracy.

However, not having made a special study of this historical point, it would probably be advisable for me to quote the opinions of more learned men instead of giving my own. Accordingly let us see what Professor Kuijper has to say about Calvinism in this connection. He contends that:

"As a political name, Calvinism indicates that political movement, which has guaranteed the liberty of nations in constitutional statesmanship; first in Holland, then in England, and since the close of the last century (the 18th) in the United States." 2)

According to Dr. RobertnFruin,

"Calvinism came into the Netherlands consisting of a logical system of divinity, of a democratic Church-order of its own, impelled by a severely moral sense, and as enthusiastic for the moral

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1) Institutes, Book IV, ch. 20, pars. 8 - 10. 2) Kuijper, "Calvinism", pp. 7f.



## NOTE.

"as for the religions reformation of mankind.'" 1)

"'In Switzerland, in France, in the Netherlands, in Scotland and in England, and wherever Protestantism has had to establish itself at the point of the sword, it was Calvinism that gained the day.'" 2)

It seems indeed that as Professor Kuijper remarks,

"Both in Holland and in France, in England as well as in America, the historic result affords most undeniable evidence of the fact that despotism has found no more invincible antagonists, and liberty of conscience no braver, no more resolute champions than the followers of Calvin." 3)

And it is the opinion of a Dutch historian, Groen van Prinsterer, that:

"'In Calvinism lies the origin and guarantee of our constitutional liberties.'" 4)

But now, Professor Kuijper is both a Calvinist and a theologian; and though these other two men are not theologians, but a scientist and an historian, respectively, yet they, too, are from a Calvinistic country. Let us see what a German Lutheran modernist critic of Calvinism has to say about the deadening tendencies of Calvinistic Fatalism.

Professor Troeltsch is here speaking of Calvinistic

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1) Quoted by Kuijper on P. 8. - Fruin, "Tien jaren uit den tachtigjarigen oorlog", p. 151.

2) Kuijper, p. 44.

3) Kuijper, "Calvinism", p.57.

4) Ibid., p. 99.

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asceticism.

"It is," he remarks, "like all Calvinism, active, aggressive; it would transform the world, to the honor of God. --- In order to this end, it rationalizes and disciplines all life by its ethical theories and by its ecclesiastical discipline. --- In mere feeling (*Gefühllichkeit und Stimmung*) it sees only inertness and lack of seriousness; it is filled with a fundamental sentiment: labor for God, for the honor of the Church! Thus the spirit of Calvinistic ethics produces a lively activity, a severe discipline, a complete plan, a social-Christian aim." 1)

Professor August Lang agrees with us as to the unsatisfactory character of Calvin's own political pronouncements, for he declares:

"It was, indeed, a thankworthy undertaking, when Calvin in his Institutio did not entirely ignore politics, but the results were of such a kind that they did not give satisfaction even negatively, on the question of the obedience of subjects and the right of resistance, much less positively." 2)

But lest we should think this is all, he reminds us:

"Calvin had inspired in his disciples that energy of piety, which abhors all half-way measures, which boldly endeavours to make all the affairs of life subject to Christ, the Head and Lord. In this congregation of the elect, the individualism of the Reformation reached its climax, and despite all subjection under God's command, there was developed a thirst for liberty, which tolerated nothing

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1) Ernst Troeltsch, "Die-Bedeutung des Protestantismus für die Entstehung der modernen Welt", p. 27. Quoted from Doumergue, "Cal. & Ref." pp. 16f.

2) "Calvinism and the Reformation", p.95.

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"that came in its way except after free and earnest investigation." 1)

If one wants a succinct and able statement of how Calvin's theological doctrines of election and the witness of the Spirit, together with his definitely democratic Church polity, laid the foundations for modern Democracy, he may find it in Reyburn's study of Calvin.<sup>2)</sup> Before there could be any real democracy, there had to be a definite change in the medieval attitude toward the common man. And this Calvin supplied when by his revival of the New Testament conception of man, he conferred upon the lowliest peasant the dignity of being a son of God, independent of priests and the peer of princes in God's Kingdom, and delegated to him the responsibility of an effective voice in the government of the Church. It is all very well to attribute the development of our modern democracies to such men as Rousseau; but one must not forget that between Rousseau and the Middle Ages there is a vast gulf, which Calvinism helped to span. Besides, it was probably not for nothing that Rousseau was born in Geneva and lived in a Europe which had a background of almost two hundred years of Calvinism.

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1) Op. cit., p. 96.

2) Reyburn, "John Calvin", pp. 343-349.

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If one considers the facts, it is not too much to say that Calvinism revolutionized the whole outlook upon life, and truly ushered in a new day. Its opponents to-day would have us believe that it has ever been the enemy of true morality, that it logically leads to deadening of initiative, and to the destruction of all beauty. But history has not shown it to be so. As Professor Kuijper remarks,

"The avoidance of the world has never been the Calvinistic mark, but the shibboleth of the Anabaptist." 1)

And his appraisal of the effects of Calvinism in his own country, is as follows:

"Scarcely had Calvinism been firmly established in the Netherlands for a quarter of a century, when there was a rustling of life in all directions, and an indomitable energy was fermenting in every department of human activity, and their commerce and trade, their handicrafts and industry, their agriculture and horticulture, their art and science, flourished with a brilliancy previously unknown, and imparted a new impulse for an entirely new development of life, to the whole of Western Europe." 2)

It does seem that one must consider Professor Kuijper's challenge:

"When --- you observe how thoroughly corrupt and rotten Calvinism found the world,--- what censor among you will dare to deny the palm of moral victory to Calvinism, which in one generation, though hunted from the battle-

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1) Op. cit., p. 91.  
2) Ibid., p. 92.



## NOTE.

"field to the scaffold, created, throughout five nations at once, wide serious groups of noble men, and still nobler women, hitherto unsurpassed in the loftiness of their ideal conceptions and unequalled in the power of their moral self-control?" 1)

It was the Reformation which exalted the common duties of men; and it is this conception of vocation, which Professor Max Weber considers its entirely new contribution:

"the esteeming the accomplishment of duty in the earthly vocation, as the ideal of personal morality." 2)

Moreover, according to Professor Doumergue, Weber, though a professor at Heidelberg,

"accords to Calvinism a much higher social influence than to Lutheranism." 3)

He considers that:

"Calvinism, historically, is one of the incontestible factors of the 'capitalistic spirit'". 4)

But we must not think of the 'capitalistic spirit' in terms of modern labour controversies. It is not the selfish spirit of a class which desires merely to accumulate wealth for its own pleasure at the expense of the efforts of another class; rather, it is, to use Doumergue's words, the

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1) Op. cit., p. 97.

2) Max Weber, "Die protestantische Ethik und der Geist des Kapitalismus", Archiv für sozial Wissenschaft und sozial Politile. Vol. XX (1904)

Quoted from Doumergue, "Calvinism and the Reformation", p.31

3) Doumergue, op. cit., p.28.

4) Weber, op. cit., p. 26.

"spirit which does not urge on to pleasure, but to production," a spirit which Doumergue contends, "is so contrary to human nature that it could only arise through the influence of an extremely efficacious spiritual power." 1)

It is the spirit which glorifies trade and commerce, manufacture and all production of economic values, as nobler than aristocratic idleness and the profession of arms. And it is a new spirit, a modern conception, which Weber remarks

"would have been proscribed in antiquity as well as in the Middle Ages, as sordid avarice and mentality without dignity." 2)

But that Calvinism does not stand for anything that may legitimately be called 'sordid avarice' is apparent from its emphasis upon the Christian conceptions of stewardship, self-denial, and charity,<sup>3)</sup> together with its conviction that the present life is but the highway to a better, upon which the Christian should ever be meditating, lest he lose himself in this lower way and<sup>4)</sup> never attain unto the higher goal. Yet it was Calvin who, to use Bavinck's words,

"formulated in a classic document the grounds on which it could be affirmed that a reasonable interest is neither in conflict with Scripture nor with the nature of money," 5)

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- 1) Doumergue, p. 32.
  - 2) Weber, v. XX, p. 19.
  - 3) Institutes, Bk. 3, chs. 6-8
  - 4) Ibid., chs. 9, 10.
  - 5) "Calvin and the Reformation", p. 128.

## NOTES.

and thus gave to modern business the sanction of religion. It was neither the jovial Dr. Luther, the loveable Melanchthon, the astute Zwingli, nor the scholarly Erasmus, who did this, but "the harsh, stern, impractically puritanic" Calvin - among the unaristocratic burghers of the little manufacturing and commercial city of Geneva.

We may summarize the social, economic, and political effects of Calvinism in the words of Professor R.H. Tawney, not a theologian but an economist, who in his "Religion and the Rise of Capitalism" says:

"Unlike the Lutheranism from which it sprang, Calvinism, assuming different shapes in different countries, became an international movement, which brought, not peace, but a sword, and the path of which was strewn with revolutions. Where Lutheranism had been socially conservative, deferential to established political authorities, the exponent of a personal almost quietistic, piety, Calvinism was an active and radical force. It was a creed which sought, not merely to purify the individual, but to reconstruct Church and State, and to renew society by penetrating every department of life, public as well as private, with the influence of religion. --- It assumed an economic organization, which was relatively advanced, and expounded its social ethics on the basis of it." 1)

The reason why revolution followed in the train of Calvinism, when Calvin himself did not preach revolution as such, is to be found in the truth of Professor

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1) Ch. 2, part 3.

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Tawney's remark that:

"the impetus to reform or revolution springs in every age from the realization of the contrast between the external order of society and the moral standards recognized as valid by the conscience and reason of the individual." 1)

Calvin enlightened the conscience and reason of the individual as to the way all men should live, and his followers very naturally disregarded his injunction not to be critical of rulers. Yet as Professor Tawney points out, neither Calvin nor Calvinism stood for any lax discipline either of Church or State, but for its Strengthening in both.

Calvinism may have been intolerant; but its intolerance was that of the rigorous life and of devotion to truth, and not that of personal ambition and desire for personal aggrandizement. It was intolerant, not of those who tried to lead the way to a better life, but of those who lagged behind or endangered the ideal which was the very nerve of the movement.

As Professor A.E. Taylor points out, (and as we have already suggested in the Introduction) the Romanist and Calvinist idea of the persecution of heresy was a thoroughly sound one intellectually. The heretic was persecuted because he was in error and his error affected the well-being

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1) Same citation.



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of the State. It is the same as Plato's view that soul destroying error ought to be repressed simply because it is error and because it is soul destroying; which is a far sounder view than the Lutheran and Elizabethan one of allowing the ruler to decide all doctrinal matters for his subjects simply because he is ruler and without regard to the truth of his opinions, or than the weak toleration so prevalent in our own day, which rests upon the assumption either that we cannot attain truth, or that it does not make any difference whether we do or not.

It is no virtue to be patient with error unless we are passionate in devotion to truth. And it might be remarked that a great many of those who prate so much about the intolerance of Calvin, and condemn him with the utmost vituperation, for the burning of Servetus, are themselves not sufficiently tolerant to investigate the matter before they give vent to their condemnation. It may also be wondered whether they are in all cases devoted to the truth or simply strongly opposed to anyone who is. Too often Calvin is condemned by such people, not for being mistaken, but really for being in earnest. Yet tolerance of error can scarcely be set up as the chief virtue by people who are themselves truly virtuous and wholly devoted to the pursuit of virtue and truth.

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Indeed it may be wondered if the sternness of Calvinistic teaching did not do more to invigorate the moral and religious life of the world, when it was in sore need of invigorating, than any modern views of toleration would have done. No great reform has ever been accomplished by reformers who were not deadly in earnest, and the modern opponents of medieval intolerance who are most earnest show themselves not entirely free from the vice which they condemn; and they would do well to remember that the earnestness of the great Genevan reformer whom they condemn most heartily, manifested itself not alone in the strenuousness of his attack on opponents but also in his willingness to pay the price of living himself<sup>1)</sup> a hard life of rigorous discipline and study.

Those who judge Calvinism by the mistakes of some Calvinists, do both Calvin and Calvinism a grave injustice. Calvinism is not opposed to the proper enjoyment of life. Calvin himself pointed out the obligation to appreciate<sup>2)</sup> its beauties, and to be grateful for them, - which makes all the difference between a mere lover of beauty, and a lover of God. He was a man who drew to himself true

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1) See Introduction above.

2) See Institutes, Book 3, chs. 9, 10. Also the comments of Professors Doumergue and Bavinck in "Calvin and the Reformation", pp. 35-37 and 124-129, resp.

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friends; and while he lived a life of hard study and almost constant labor, he ever enjoyed the fellowship of his friends, and his letters manifest his sincere interest in all their concerns and his own participation in the normal social life possible to a cultured gentleman who found himself weighed down with many responsibilities, which honor and Christian fidelity prevented his casting off.

Those whose ideal of beauty is the immoral, whose conception of pleasure is licentious abandonment to sensual enjoyment, whose chief aim in life is idleness, will ever find in Calvinism an ardent antagonist. For Calvinism has rightly been called "the gospel of hard work"; its conception of the highest enjoyment is the uncompromising morality of a truly good life; its ideal of beauty is to be found in the face of Christ. It makes a distinction between righteousness and wickedness, and it prefers the former. It is not always easy to distinguish between the two, and Calvinists have not always drawn the line in the right place; but it is a grave injustice to Calvinism to say that it despises 'beauty' and 'happiness' as synonymous with 'evil'. It rather says that true 'beauty' and true 'happiness' are to be found only in the 'good'; and that consequently, the chief end of life is the pursuit of righteousness. All who have this ideal will

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find in Calvinism that with which they can sincerely be in sympathy. Those who have it not, will find themselves in opposition not only to Calvin, but to Christ - and are in much need of Him.

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## Part III.

## CRITICISM OF CALVIN'S TEACHING.

## Chapter VIII.

ANALYSIS OF CALVIN'S TEACHING.The Two Approaches: Providence and Total Depravity.

If one starts with the idea of God's Sovereignty, one comes inevitably to the Calvinistic doctrine of Providence, which is nothing more than the contention that all things happen in accord with and because of the Divine decree. In this alone we have a complete and absolute Theistic Determinism, the elaboration of which will logically lead to the formulation of the Calvinistic doctrines of Creation and Predestination; for since on this view, all things are dependent upon God, nothing can come into being except by His decree, and the destiny of individuals must be fixed by Him. Undoubtedly this idea of God's Sovereignty was a basic conception in Calvin's thought, and forms one approach to his system of theology, - a philosophical approach through the development of a particular cosmology centering around the doctrine of Providence.

But this was not the only approach. Calvin, like Paul, Augustine, and Luther before him, was much impressed by his own sinfulness and man's general inability to save

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himself. This conviction of human bondage to sin found theological expression in the doctrine of Total Depravity. Man himself was imperfect; every part of him was sinful; everything he did was evil. There was no hope in him. The moral law demanded perfection, and he was wholly incapable of it. If he was to be saved from sin, he must be saved by the power of God. But the power of God must not only be offered to him, it must lay hold upon him; for he had not enough strength to lay hold upon it. And thus we have the doctrine of God's Irresistible Grace. Moreover, if man was to persist in the way of righteousness, he must not only be laid hold upon, he must be kept by the power of God; in saying which we have expressed the need for the doctrine of Perseverance. All of man's subsequent righteousness depended not upon himself but upon God; even his Christian faith was gratuitous. He was regenerated by the Spirit of God; justified by the imputed righteousness of Christ; gradually sanctified by the indwelling of the Holy Spirit. His whole redemption was the work of God. But why should God have singled out this particular man for His peculiar bounty? The answer to this was the mystery of the Divine Election. Some men were from all eternity elected to eternal life in Christ. This is the religious approach.

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To a casual observer these two developments may seem to end at the same place. But this is scarcely true. The first approach gives us a complete and absolute Determinism. It gives no specific details. But none are needed. Whatever the actual history of the world and of men, all things are as they are because God has willed them to be so. That is the ultimate explanation of all things, the connecting thread that runs through all that is. God is the ground and cause of all things.

The other approach does not necessarily carry us so far. It leads us to suppose that the destiny of men is fixed by God; but apart from a theory of strict universal causation, it does not imply that all the details of life are determined. It does imply a doctrine of Providence; but it is a sort of lax overruling Providence, which is concerned to secure its ends, but is not concerned to trouble about how it secures them. It is a Providence which is satisfied so long as things "turn out all right", and it is the sort of Providence which can assure that they will "turn out all right" in spite of what happens in the meantime.

Now this may be a very loose and unjustifiable view of God's government of the universe; but it is a most common one, and strangest of all, it is a view from which Calvin himself, in spite of all his opinions to the contrary,

### DUAL APPROACH.

could never get wholly free. It starts with man as separate from God, distinctly and definitely other than God, as an object upon which God exerts His power. It does not matter that man is unable to resist God's power; the significant point is that he is something for God to exert His power upon.

But how does he become so?

Obviously if one starts with the doctrine of Total Depravity, or any other such view of man's separation from God, one has sooner or later to confront the difficult question of how it happens that man is so depraved. One may occupy himself for a time with working out the details of how the redeemed get out of this deplorable condition; but this never answers the question as to how they got into it.

If God created men, - and the doctrine of Creation from this approach rests upon an independent foundation in Christian theology, - how does it happen that they are sinners? The historic answer is: the Fall.

The Fundamental Inconsistency of Calvinism: The Fall and Providence.

But how does one reconcile the Fall with the



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Calvinistic doctrine of Providence? This appears simple enough. One need only say that the Fall, like every other event in the history of the world, was decreed by God. And this, when he is opposing Libertarians, Calvin admits; for he expressly declares:

"But not to wrangle about words, I willingly, and in a moment confess, that what I have written is this, - 'That the fall of Adam was not by accident, nor by chance; but ordained by the secret counsel of God.'" 1)

But if God decreed the Fall of Adam, it must have been in accord with His will. And this, Calvin will not deny; for he definitely affirms that:

"The WILL of GOD is the one principle and all high CAUSE of all things, in heaven and earth!" 2)

But while this is a most consistent and thorough-going view; it has still one difficulty in its way: Does it not make God the author of evil? Calvin admits:

"that a whole volume might be made of --- passages of the Holy Scriptures, where God is made the author, as commander, of the evil and cruel deeds done by men and nations." 3)

But that God is the author of sin, he most vehemently denies, 4)

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- 1) Calvin's Calvinism, p. 61.
  - 2) Calvin's Calvinism, p. 26. See above, ch.1.
  - 3) Calvin's Calvinism, p.80.
  - 4) Above, ch.1., op. cit., p.86. See also "De Libero Arbitrio", p. 36, where Calvin says: "Tum intelligemus, nec Deum fieri malorum autorem, quum dicitur impios agere quo vult, et per illos opus suum peragere et exsequi: sed potius confitebimur esse eximium et mirificum artificem, qui bene etiam malis instrumentis utatur: iustitiam eius cogemur suspicere, quae non modo in media iniquitate viam inveniatur, sed ipsa quoque iniquitate utatur in bonum." (Corpus Ref. vol. 34, col. 258).

on the ground that God's motives and ends are always good, even when He wills these evil deeds of men. God, then, is not the author of sin, Calvin contends, because sin is something which characterizes evil motives, and only the creature's motives can ever be evil.

But now, while this proves that God's actions are not sinful, because His motives are good, it does not prove that God is not the author of sin in exactly the same way that it may be contended that He is the author of everything else. The sinful motives may belong to the creature, and may not be God's motives at all; yet God most certainly wills them, and they are as much a part of His decree as the acts towards which they tend.

However, it appears that Calvin never quite perceived this. For while he was firm to maintain that nothing happened save by God's decree, and declares:

"God not only foresaw the fall of the first man, and the ruin of his posterity in him, but also arranged all by the determination of his own will;" 1)  
and argues that it is foolish to try to relieve God of the responsibility by resorting to an impossible distinction between permission and will; " 2)

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- 1) Institutes, Book III, ch. 23, par. 7.
  - 2) Ibid,, Book 3, ch. 23. par. 8.

## INCONSISTENCY.

yet he never seems to see the full import of his own teaching, and is forever trying to show that man is the one ultimately responsible for the existence of sin.

He professes to have proved,

"with all possible clearness, that God was not, in any sense, or degree, or manner, whatever, the author of sin!" 1)

and agrees with Augustine, that

"God "doth not make wills evil; but useth the wills of men already evil, as He pleaseth; nor can he, of himself, will anything that is evil." 2)

But the ambiguity of his whole position may be seen from the following quotations from the Institutes, where he is treating the subject of the Fall and original sin:

"Now, let us dismiss those who dare to charge God with their corruptions, because we say that men are naturally corrupt. They err in seeking for the work of God in their own pollution, whereas they should rather seek it in the nature of Adam while yet innocent and uncorrupted. Our perdition therefore proceeds from the sinfulness of our flesh, not from God: it being only a consequence of our degenerating from our primitive condition. --- Wherefore let us remember, that our ruin must be imputed to the corruption of our nature, that we may not bring an accusation against God himself, the author of our nature. That this fatal wound is inherent in our nature, is indeed a truth; but it is an important question,

1) "Calvin's Calvinism", Part II., p. 86.

2) Ibid., p. 25. See also Ch. I. of Thesis.

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"whether it was in it originally, or was derived from any extraneous cause. But it is evident that it was occasioned by sin. -- It is clear that the misery of man must be ascribed solely to himself, since he was favoured with rectitude by the Divine goodness, but has lapsed into vanity through his own folly.

"We say, therefore, that man is corrupted by a natural depravity, but which did not originate from nature." 1)

The absolute uselessness of such argument, appears when we ask what caused the sinfulness of our flesh, and how does it happen that an innocent and uncorrupted creature could have degenerated from this primitive condition. It is most enlightening to be told that the corruption of our nature was occasioned by sin; but what we naturally want to know is: Who or what occasioned sin? How is it that there can be an extraneous cause for our corruption, when

"the WILL of GOD is the one principal and all high CAUSE of all things, in heaven and earth!"?

But that this ambiguity is not just a temporary oversight on Calvin's part, is apparent from the following display of it in his discussion of the doctrine of Predestination in a later book, of the Institutes. Here he declares:

- 1) Institutes, Book II, ch. 1, pars. 10 and 11.  
Underlining mine.



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"It is not probable --- that man procured his own destruction by the mere permission, and without any appointment, of God; as though God had not determined what he would choose to be the condition of the principal of his creatures. I shall not hesitate, therefore, to confess plainly with Augustine, 'that the will of God is the necessity of things, and that what he has willed will necessarily come to pass; as those things are really about to happen which he has foreseen.' Now, if either Pelagians, or Manichaeans, or Anabaptists, or Epicureans, --- in excuse for themselves and the impious, plead the necessity with which they are bound by God's predestination, - they allege nothing applicable to the case. For if predestination is no other than a dispensation of Divine justice, - mysterious indeed, but liable to no blame, - since it is certain they were not unworthy of being predestinated to that fate, it is equally certain, that the destruction they incur by predestination is consistent with the strictest justice. Besides, their perdition depends on the Divine predestination in such a manner, that the cause and matter of it are found in themselves. For the first man fell because the Lord had determined it was so expedient. The reason of this determination is unknown to us. Yet it is certain that he determined thus, only because he foresaw it would tend to the just illustration of the glory of his name. Whenever you hear the glory of God mentioned, think of his justice. For what deserves praise must be just. Man falls, therefore, according to the appointment of Divine Providence; but he falls by his own fault. The Lord had a little before pronounced 'everything that he had made' to be 'very good'. Whence, then, comes the depravity of man to revolt from his God? Lest it should be thought to come from creation, God had approved and commended what had proceeded from himself. By his own wickedness, therefore, he corrupted the nature he had received pure from the Lord, and by his fall he drew all his posterity with him into destruction.

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"Wherefore let us rather contemplate the evident cause of condemnation, which is nearer to us in the corrupt nature of mankind, than search after a hidden and altogether incomprehensible one in the predestination of God. -----

"The reprobate wish to be thought excusable in sinning, because they cannot avoid a necessity of sinning; especially since this necessity is laid upon them by the ordination of God. But we deny this to be a just excuse; because the ordination of God, by which they complain that they are destined to destruction, is guided by equity, unknown indeed to us, but indubitably certain. Whence we conclude, that they sustain no misery that is not inflicted upon them by the most righteous judgment of God. In the next place, we maintain that they act preposterously, who, in seeking for the origin of their condemnation, direct their views to the secret recesses of the Divine counsel, and overlook the corruption of nature, which is its real source. The testimony God gives to his creation prevents their imputing it to him. For though, by the eternal providence of God, man was created to that misery to which he is subject, yet the ground of it he has derived from himself, not from God; since he is thus ruined solely in consequence of his having degenerated from the pure creation of God to vicious and impure depravity." 1)

Such an argument as this, indicates that the whole problem was very much confused in Calvin's mind and that he was never able to reconcile his doctrine of Providence with his conception of the Fall - simply because they were absolutely contradictory. One minute he contends that God appointed and willed the destruction of man;

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1) Institutes, Book III, ch. 23, pars. 8 and 9.

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and with the next breath he maintains that God had nothing to do with it. But now obviously both of these assertions cannot be true, in view of the fact that God created man and knew what he would do. Again, how is it possible for man to have corrupted his nature by his own wickedness, when, if such is the case, he must have been wicked prior to his corruption? Calvin, as we have seen, had himself contended in his treatise on Predestination,<sup>1)</sup> that to hold that the non-elect

"were 'fitted to destruction' by their own wickedness, is an idea so silly, that it needs no notice."

Yet here he is himself making exactly this contention.

His reasoning is most extraordinary. He appears to contend that there are two causes for man's condemnation: the one hidden in God's incomprehensible predestination; the other obvious in man's corruption: and that there is no connection between them. But in the very next paragraph he seemingly admits that the reprobate do have a necessity of sinning laid on them by the ordination of God. And obviously, if God decreed the Fall, as Calvin firmly maintains He did, then His ordination must be as much the cause of ~~man's~~ sin as of his condemnation.

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1) Calvin's Calvinism, Part I., p. 60. See also Ch. 5 of thesis.

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It is all very well to contend that the reprobate sustain no misery that is not inflicted upon them by the most righteous judgment of God; but if, as Calvin does not deny, their sin is from a necessity laid upon them by the ordination of God, then a legal judgment can in no sense be the ultimate explanation of the situation. It is not enough to say that the men being sinners deserve no better at God's hands. The real problem is that their fate was decided before they became sinners, when they deserved nothing at God's hands, either good or evil. His decision of their destiny, therefore, cannot be based upon their evil desert, since this is really but a part of it.

How anybody could maintain in the same sentence that

"by the eternal providence of God, man was created to that misery to which he is subject, yet the ground of it he has derived from himself, not from God; since he is thus ruined solely in consequence of his having degenerated from the pure creation of God to vicious and impure depravity",

is more than one can readily understand. Here Calvin is declaring that God created man to misery, but the reason for the misery, is to be found in man himself. But surely the ultimate reason for the misery cannot be found in man himself,



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if God created him with deliberate knowledge of the end of his creation. It sounds very much as if Calvin were trying to say that God created man to a particular fate, which fate was a condemnation for something man did after he was created. But this is as if a judge passed sentence on a man for a crime which he had not yet committed, on the strength of his assurance that he would commit it because he, the judge, would see to it that he did. The figure of the judge simply breaks down as an ultimate explanation of the situation. It is perfectly all right for Calvin to contend that the ground for man's misery is derived from himself, in the sense that his misery is the consequence of his voluntary sin. But on the theory that this result is a definite part of God's eternal decree, we are forced to say that the ultimate cause of man's voluntary sin is this same eternal decree. The ultimate ground for the whole situation cannot be discovered in a part of the situation itself, but must be in God, who alone determined that this situation should be. Otherwise we must have God decreeing the misery of man subsequent to the Fall, and not prior to it. And ~~again~~ we must ask Calvin how a pure creature could have degenerated into a depraved one.

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The Heart of the Trouble: Supposition of Adam's Freedom.

In the last analysis the whole difficulty goes back to Calvin's attempt to relieve God of the responsibility for sin, through maintaining that in his original state Adam possessed a real freedom of the will.<sup>1)</sup>

This is shown not only from the preceding argument, but more directly by the following quotation from the Institutes, where Calvin is referring to the primitive condition of man:

"God has furnished the soul of man, therefore, with a mind capable of discerning good from evil, and just from unjust; and of discovering by the right of reason, what ought to be pursued or avoided. --- To this he has added the will, on which depends the choice. The primitive condition of man was ennobled with those eminent faculties; he possessed reason, understanding, prudence, and judgment, not only for the government of his life on earth, but

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1) See "De Libero Arbitrio", pp. 36f., where Calvin declares: "Ne tamen id declinandi causa facere videar, respondeo, et Lutherum, et nos omnes, duplicem constituere naturam: priorem, qualis a Deo condita fuerat, quam puram et integram fatemur fuisse; alteram quae lapsu hominis vitata, suam integritatem perdidit. Huius vitiositatis culpam homini tribuimus, non referimus in Deum. --- Aut si malit, ex Augustini ore respondebimus, quod libro ad Bonifacium primo habetur: homines esse opus Dei, in quantum homines sunt, sed sub diabolo esse, in quantum peccatores sunt, nisi inde per Christum eruantur. A Deo igitur boni, a se ipsis mali sunt." (Corpus Reformatorum, vol. 34, col. 259.)

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"to enable him to ascend even to God and eternal felicity. To these was added choice, to direct the appetites, and regulate all the organic motions; so that the will should be entirely conformed to the government of reason. In this integrity man was endued with free will, by which, if he had chosen, he might have obtained eternal life. For here it would be unreasonable to introduce the question respecting the secret predestination of God, because we are not discussing what might possibly have happened or not, but what was the real nature of man. Adam, therefore, could have stood if he would, since he fell merely by his own will; but because his will was flexible to either side, and he was not endued with constancy to persevere, therefore he so easily fell. Yet his choice of good and evil was free; and not only so, but his mind and will were possessed of consummate rectitude, and all his organic parts were rightly disposed to obedience, till, destroying himself, he corrupted all his excellencies. --- At present be it only remembered, that, man, at his first creation, was very different from all his posterity, who, deriving their original from him in his corrupted state, have contracted an hereditary defilement. For all parts of his soul were formed with the utmost rectitude; he enjoyed soundness of mind, and a will free to the choice of good. --- He had received the power, indeed, if he chose to exert it; but he had not the will to use that power; for the consequence of this will would have been perseverance. Yet there is no excuse for him; he received so much, that he was the voluntary procurer of his own destruction; but God was under no necessity to give him any other than an indifferent and mutable will, that from his fall he might educe matter for his own glory." 1)

It is Calvin's contention, ~~moreover~~, that man lost this freedom of will in the Fall, and that he is now no longer

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1) Institutes, Book I., ch. 15, par. 8. See also Book II, ch. 1, par. 10, quoted above on page 150.

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possessed of the power to choose between good and evil,<sup>1)</sup>  
but is merely free from external constraint.

What Calvin is saying really amounts to this: God foreordained just what man would do; but man was confronted with real alternatives<sup>2)</sup> (for otherwise he was not really free to choose good when as a matter of fact he chose evil).

But now this is a clear contradiction; unless God's foreordination is ineffectual. Either what God wills is absolutely certain of fulfilment, or it is not. If it is, then Adam was not confronted with any real alternatives; because God had already decided what Adam was to do, and all possibility of his doing otherwise was precluded. If it is not, then the doctrine of God's Sovereignty is a mere fiction. Again, either Adam's conduct was fixed and determined by God, or it was not. If it was fixed and determined by God, Adam had no real freedom of choice; because the only thing he could do was exactly what he did. But if his conduct was not fixed and determined by God, it was absolutely uncertain; and God could have no knowledge of what Adam would do. In

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1) See Institutes, Book 2, ch. 2, and ch. 2 of Thesis.  
2) For an attempt to combine these positions through the idea of remote and proximate causes, see "Calvin's Calvinism", Part 1, pp. 76, 77, Calvin seems to vary his emphasis according to his opponent. When he is opposing a man who contends for free will, he stresses the proof of God's foreordination even of the Fall. But when someone accuses him of putting the responsibility for sin upon God, then turns and argues for the freedom of Adam.



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other words, if Adam had the real freedom of choice for which Calvin is here contending, God instead of decreeing the event, had to wait until after it occurred before He could even know what it was to be. But if God did foreknow exactly what this particular man, Adam, would do under these particular circumstances, then when He created this particular man, Adam, and placed him in these particular circumstances, He definitely determined exactly what Adam would do, and Adam was not free to do otherwise.

It may be perfectly true that Adam could have been otherwise if he had wanted to. But this is only to say that he was free from external compulsion, and is to accord him no different freedom from that with which all men since the Fall have been endowed.<sup>1)</sup> We are free to do good if we want; the trouble is that being sinful, we do not want to bad enough.

It is a mere myth to suppose that Adam had any different sort of freedom from that which we possess to-day; namely, the freedom of expressing his own character under the circumstances in which he found himself. He

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1) See Institutes, Book 2, ch. 2. Also Aquinas, Summa, Part 1, Question 83, Second Article: "Man is said to have lost free-will by falling into sin, not as to natural liberty, which is freedom from coercion, but as regards freedom from fault and misery."

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was free to do as he pleased; but he was not free to please contrary to the decree of God. If we suppose otherwise, we introduce an element of real chance and irrationality into the universe. The only freedom possible in a rational universe is the freedom of self-expression. It is this freedom which definitely fixes and determines our own conduct; it was exactly the same that determined Adam's. Adam could do whatever he wanted to do under the circumstances; but God determined exactly what he would want to do, by making him just the person he was. If there is any difference between us and Adam, it relates not to any different freedom of the will, but to difference of character.

But now, was Adam's character any different from ours? It would seem that Calvin's whole description of Adam is self-contradictory. He had "a mind capable of discerning good from evil", and a will "entirely conformed to the government of reason", and "his mind and will were possessed of consummate rectitude"; yet this being, in whose original nature there was no evil whatever, when confronted by the choice between good and evil, chose the evil! "By their fruits ye shall know them"; but here is a good tree which bears evil fruit! Moreover, Calvin speaks of Adam's will

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as indifferent and mutable. But how can it be indifferent and mutable when it is "entirely conformed to the government of reason"? Was Adam's will so free that it was not even controlled by his character and understanding? If so, it can scarcely be called his will, and it certainly relieves him of all responsibility for his conduct. In our own day, a conscientious magistrate would consign such a person to a place of safe-keeping, lest he do himself and others harm; and if Adam were such a creature, God appears highly reprehensible for turning him loose in the world, to ruin himself and the whole race. Instead of making him superior to the rest of men, such an endowment makes Adam a most inferior creature, below the level of a rational human being.

But if Adam's will were governed by his character and understanding, and there was no fault in either his character or his understanding, how could he possibly have chosen evil instead of good? It is useless to say that he had become corrupt. Perfectly good creatures in a good universe created by a good God, do not just become corrupt without a definite cause of their corruption. But what cause can be found? It can certainly not be contended, as Calvin is guilty of doing, that man corrupted

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himself; because prior to his corruption it is Calvin's contention that man was wholly good.

Calvin could never get around the Fall, and in contending that in it man lost his real freedom, he puts himself in the strange position of making subjection to God synchronous with bondage to sin. For he maintains that since the Fall man is in bondage to sin. But he also maintains that since the Fall man is absolutely controlled by God, for the following quotations relate to man in his fallen state.

"It is, indeed, a ridiculous madness for miserable men to resolve on undertaking work independently of God, whilst they cannot even speak a word but what he chooses." 1)

"Men --- can effect nothing but by the secret will of God, and can deliberate on nothing but what he has previously decreed, and determined by his secret direction." 2)

"Whatever conceptions we form in our minds, they are directed by the secret inspiration of God." 3)

Now if Adam were so controlled by God, he was incapable of doing other than he did and he possessed no more freedom than we do. But if Adam was really free, and our present lack of freedom is, as Calvin affirms, due to our bondage to sin, we might well contend that if we were not slaves to sin we would be free from God - just as Adam was.

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- 1) Institutes, Book 1, ch. 16, par. 6
  - 2) Institutes, Book 1, ch. 18, par. 1
  - 3) Ibid., par. 2.



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The thing Calvin failed to see was that Adam's will, just as ours, was in bondage to his character, and that Adam himself, just as the rest of us, was in bondage to God, - merely because God made him and had determined from all eternity exactly what he was to be and how he was to live. If there is a Calvinistic Providence, there is not to-day, and there never has been, any such freedom of the will as Calvin attributed to Adam.

Calvin is here "between the devil and the deep blue sea". If he contends that God is not the author of sin in the sense of being the one ultimately responsible for its existence in the world, he must introduce a break in the causal order of the universe, and contend that although God created man, man himself is solely responsible for sin, and God had nothing to do with it. But if he admits that God is the author of sin in this sense, he has then to acknowledge, it would seem, that if God is good, sin in the last analysis is not evil.

He attempts to escape from this situation by holding to both Providence and Freedom. But this procedure is absolutely futile; for even if the conditions were as he maintains, he does not relieve God of the ultimate

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responsibility for sin. His position seems to be that God created a perfectly good creature, but that He knew from the very beginning that this perfectly good creature, if left to himself, would eventually sin. How he could sin, and how God could know that he would, without actively causing him to, are questions to be waived for the sake of argument; but if God foreknew the fall of this creature, even though He had no active part in it at the time, yet in His creation of this perfectly good creature, He was sanctioning the existence of sin in a world for which He was ultimately responsible, and actively participating in bringing it about, since He was actively making the being whom He knew definitely would bring it about. The only possible way of relieving Him of this ultimate and active responsibility for sin, is to deny altogether that He is the Absolute Governor of the universe, and to contend that sin is something definitely opposed to His will, and something which He did not foresee. But Calvin seems laboring under the old Gnostic delusion that one relieves God of the responsibility for sin by putting several intermediaries between Him and it. But the only way of making this process really effective is to sever all connection

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between the two; and one can only do this by postulating either a Manichaeian dualism, or a God who is not omnipotent and omniscient. It can never be done by putting in any amount of time intervals or subsidiary agents.

And after all, why should Calvin be so particular to have Adam possess a different sort of freedom from that which is required to fix moral responsibility in us? All that is required in our case is that our sin be voluntary. The only freedom Calvin will accord to us is freedom from coercion. Yet he contends that this is sufficient to establish our guilt and justify our condemnation. But if this is so, why was it not sufficient in Adam's case? The very fact that Calvin apparently thinks it not to have been, seems to indicate that he only considers it so in our case because he believes that ultimately our responsibility rests upon a more absolute freedom possessed by us in Adam. But if Adam actually possessed no other freedom than we possess, then Calvin will be forced to conclude, either that this is sufficient to ground moral responsibility, or that neither we nor Adam are morally responsible.

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Calvin's whole supposition of the original perfections of Adam has no foundation whatever in the facts of the case. All he knows about Adam is that he was the sort of person who under the circumstances of the situation in which he was placed voluntarily chose evil instead of good. But since he was created by God, the only thing we can conclude is that God made him just the sort of creature who would act this way under these circumstances. And if he is to be held morally responsible or accountable for his conduct, the only conclusion the facts warrant is that spontaneity or the quality of voluntariness is sufficient to ground it. If he had been made to sin against his will, he could not have been held accountable. He sinned because he wanted to, and the fact that God made him the sort of person who would want to, does not argue that he deserves eternal life instead of destruction. The only question to be asked of Adam is whether he sinned because he wanted to. If so, it indicates his character, and his character indicates his desert. It is so with the clay in the hands of the potter: no one contends that the



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vessel of dishonor deserves a place of honor. It is so with men.

General Evidence of Pluralism: the Conception of God as Ruler and Judge.

It is apparent from these inconsistencies in his dealing with the Problem of Evil, that Calvin is not a conscious Determinist, in spite of the deterministic trend of his teaching. If he consistently held to his cardinal doctrine of Providence, he would be a thorough-going Determinist; but throughout all his theology, in spite of his reputation for having developed such a logical system, there is an evident vagueness and ambiguity, and even a definite conflict of conceptions. The idea of a limited freedom appears not only in connection with the Fall, but as a sort of haunting spectre through all his thought. Calvin is generally not aware of its presence; but even when he is most vehemently denouncing it, it leers through the very figures of his speech.

We are not so much concerned here with isolated paragraphs, as with the whole tenor of his writings, Even when he is trying to convince us that the whole world is sustained by the power of God, and that nothing

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happens but by His direction, that the presence of the Divine power is "no less in the perpetual state of the world than in its first origin", 1) that,

"unless we proceed to his providence, we have no correct conception of the meaning of this article, 'that God is the Creator'", 2)

that,

"all creatures, above and below, are ready for his service, that he may apply them to any use that he pleases"; 3)

even when he gives us the impression that he considers God the sole ultimate Mover of the universe; there is the very definite feeling that he is only thinking of God as a glorified Ruler and Judge.

When Calvin in speaking of the subjection of men to God, declares:

"Their deliberations, wills, endeavours, and powers, are under his control, so that it is his option to direct them whithersoever he pleases, and to restrain them as often as he pleases", 4)

one cannot help asking what in them there is to restrain except that which He has Himself created and inspired.

All such language, which implies that we are separate from God and that He governs us merely by the external use

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- 1) Institutes, v. 1, p. 182. (Bk. I., Ch. 16, par 1. )  
 2) Ibid., pp. 182f. (Ibid.)  
 3) Ibid., p. 191 (Ibid., par 7.)  
 4) Institutes, Book 1, ch. 17, par. 6. See also the whole of Book 1, chs. 16-18, and Book 2, ch. 4.

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of greater power, fails entirely to do justice to the relation of Creator and creature. The reason all pluralistic conceptions are inadequate is because the difference between us and God is not one of degree, but of kind. We are not simply influenced by God; we are wholly and in every way dependent upon Him. But while Calvin tries to emphasize our dependence, one cannot help feeling that he himself never quite gets beyond the conception of God as a great King, from whom His subjects are really separate, a King who exists in the same world with us, and against whom it is the height of folly but nevertheless possible to revolt - at least in mind. The suggestion of this pluralistic conception of God as merely another Being in the realm of our being comes out especially in Calvin's attitude towards sin and punishment, - and strangely enough, even in that part of it which deals with what might be considered by some his most deterministic doctrine - that of Election.

Erroneous Defence of Election.

In his defence of Election, Calvin often speaks of it as though it were selection; and such a mode of thought is inherent in the whole traditional idea of God's mercy.

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Calvin maintains:

"There will, therefore, be no contradiction in our affirming, that according to the good pleasure of his will, God chooses whom he will as his children, irrespective of all merit, while he rejects and reprobates others. Yet, for the sake of further satisfaction, the matter may be explained in the following manner: They ask how it happens, that of two persons distinguished from each other by no merit, God in his election, leaves one and takes another. I, on the other hand, ask them, whether they suppose, him that is taken to possess anything that can attract the favour of God. If they confess that he has not, as indeed they must, it will follow, that God looks not at man, but derives his motive to favour him from his own goodness. God's election of one man, therefore, while he rejects another, proceeds not from any respect of man, but solely from his own mercy; which may freely display and exert itself wherever and whenever it pleases. 1)

Calvin agrees with Augustine that:

"The whole mass of mankind having fallen into condemnation in the first man, the vessels that are formed from it to honor, are not vessels of personal righteousness, but of Divine mercy; and the formation of others to dishonor, is to be attributed, not to iniquity, but to the Divine decree." 2)

And he himself remarks:

"The Lord, therefore, may give grace to whom he will, because he is merciful, and yet not give it to all, because he is a just judge; may manifest his free grace, by giving to some what they never deserve, while, by not giving

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 1) ~~Op. cit.~~ Book III, ch. 23, par. 10. Underlining mine.  
 2) Institutes, Book III, ch. 23, par. 11.



## ELECTION.

"to all, he declares the demerit of all." 1)

But what place has all this in connection with the Calvinistic doctrines of Creation and Providence? Calvin speaks here as if God were making his election from creatures already in existence, and not only already in existence, but already in sin; whereas according to his own profession, it is an eternal decree, made in the secret recesses of the Divine Will before man was ever created.<sup>2)</sup>

Calvin only increases the difficulties of his defence of the doctrine by not clearly perceiving the full import of it. Augustine is wise enough to see that if we attribute God's election of some from among those who are already in condemnation, not to any merit in themselves, but to God's mercy, we must attribute His rejection of the others, not to their iniquity, but to His Divine decree. But Calvin is determined to defend the whole procedure on the grounds of a combination of justice and mercy.

But now it should be clear that if there is admittedly no difference between men, God can have no reasonable grounds for discriminating between them. Calvin seems

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1) Op.cit., par. 11.

2) Institutes, op. cit., ch.21, par. 5.

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to suppose that because on his theory the punishment meted out to those rejected in the Divine election is only that already due to them as sinners, there can be no question of its justice. But the whole point is that these rejected ones deserve this punishment no more than those excused from it; and that if there is no ground for discrimination in the individuals themselves, the discrimination is unjust: so that God must either forgive all, or condemn all, or else be unjust to those who are rejected - who merit salvation just as much as those who gain it. Their original defection may be just ground for their punishment, if we are to consider the matter from the standpoint of a judgment; but it can certainly not be in any sense the ground for their rejection in the election of some to eternal life. If as Calvin maintains, the reason for the Divine election is to be found solely in God, it follows inevitably that the reason for rejection must be found there also; and that if there is no reference to the merits of man in election, there can likewise be none in rejection.

But the motive of mercy in God, which Calvin maintains is the sole basis of Divine election, cannot possibly be the basis of God's discriminating between

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two men of equal guilt. There is nothing in the subjective motives of mercy and justice which makes a distinction between the men elected and those rejected. Pure will, in itself, even though it be the Divine Will, cannot be the grounds of a decision in a rational universe. God must have some reason for willing as He does. And in the situation supposed this reason must have regard to some Divinely discernible differences between men. But Calvin denies the existence of any such differences, or that the Divine decision has any reference to them. Therefore, since there is absolutely no way out of the situation which he supposes, we must conclude that this whole supposed situation is an entirely erroneous one. And such on the basis of Calvin's fundamental presuppositions it can be shown to be.

What Calvin should have seen was that if, as he maintains, God's election was from all eternity, men were not as Augustine depicted them, in a condition of sin and condemnation at the time of election, - they were not even created. The whole difficulty which Calvin is trying to get around is one which logically has no place at all in the Calvinistic system. For the Calvinistic position is simply that God makes no

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selection between already existing individuals;

He merely creates individuals for specific ends. And since this involves no discrimination between existing persons, it cannot be accused of injustice on that score; though it may have to meet other criticisms.

Calvin, however, is wedded to the idea of punishment as a basic fact of God's relation to men. The wicked are damned in punishment for their sins, and God is the righteous Judge who condemns their disobedience. He proudly acknowledges:

"I everywhere teach, that no one perishes but by the just judgment of God." 1)

But while it is certainly true that God never allows the righteous to perish, but only consigns the wicked to destruction, it appears from what has just been said with regard to Election, that the fate of the wicked cannot in the last analysis be considered as punishment for their wickedness, - simply because according to the Calvinistic view, both their wickedness and their destruction rest upon God's eternal decree. From His standpoint, therefore, the basic explanation of the whole proceeding cannot be that of punishment, but

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1) "Calvin's Calvinism," Part 11., p. 117.



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must rather be that of means and end.

The idea of punishment and judgment is an essentially pluralistic conception, and implies a separation between Creator and creature which is not warranted by a consistent statement of the Calvinistic conception of Providence.

The Source of Difficulty: Dependence upon Scripture;  
the Two Conceptions of God.

The real source of the difficulty, however, in Calvin's theology goes back to his complete dependence upon Scripture, and to the fact that he unconsciously takes over from the Bible the <sup>different</sup> conceptions of God which run through the whole of both the Old and the New Testaments. There, on the one hand, we find God as the omnipotent and omniscient Creator and Governor of the Universe; on the other, we find Him as a very powerful, but not omnipotent, Force for Righteousness. In all probability the second conception is but a paring down of the first; but neither seems to supplant the other, and we find the two side by side throughout the whole of the Bible, - and throughout the whole of subsequent Christian

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theology, as well. Yet they are distinct and contradictory conceptions, and consequently, cannot both be true on the same level of reality. But the Hebrew writers are continually interchanging them on the same pages of Scripture; and Christian theologians have inherited the custom.

"In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth;" all the nations of the world are His: the evil of Joseph's brethren serves His purposes; the obstinacy of the Egyptians is in perfect accord with His ends; the Chaldeans, the Assyrians, the Persians, are but His tools, the instruments of His wrath; Cyrus is His anointed; Nebuchadnezzar is His servant; all men are but as clay in His hands; the heaven declare His glory, and the firmament showeth His handiwork; He can do all things, and no purpose of His can be restrained; no man can come unto Christ, "except it be given unto him of the Father"; and all which the Father giveth shall come unto Christ; "all things work together for good, to them that are called according to His purpose"; seeing that "whom he foreknew, he also foreordained to be conformed to the image of his Son, --- and whom he foreordained, them he also called; and whom he called, them he also justified: and whom he

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justified, them he also glorified"; even as he chose them in Christ before the foundation of the world, --- having foreordained them unto adoption as sons through Jesus Christ unto himself, according to the good pleasure of his will; because in God "we live, and move, and have our being"; "for of him, and through him, and to him, are all things"; He is the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end, the first and the last; and He shall be all in all. Now these expressions are all Biblical and all deterministic.

But side by side with them we find others to the effect that man revolted against God at the instigation of the devil; that God had to destroy all His human creatures but those preserved in the Ark, because they were evil; that God was continually struggling with Israel, a wayward people in the wilderness, an idolatrous one after they were settled in Canaan; that He was ever striving to restrain them from oppressing their weaker brethren, from injustice, from running after the effeminate luxuries of their heathen neighbours; that He sent His prophets to them with little or no avail; that in the end He sent His Son, and Him they killed; but in spite of all this, that God wills not the destruction of any but that

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all might be saved. The picture is always one of a righteous God, wooing a sinful people, now entreating them, now chastening them, now conferring His favors upon them; and they are ever turning away from Him and disobeying Him, returning to Him occasionally for healing, but turning again to follow their own ways, which are not His ways. It runs continually through the prophets, in Isaiah, Amos, Hosea. We find it again in the New Testament in the thought of God sending His Son into the world as an evidence of His love to all, as a last and supreme attempt to win men to His kindly rule. It underlies the thought of His eventually destroying the wicked and finally establishing His universal reign; for this is the language of a definite pluralism in which God is merely the strongest factor, who, unable to succeed by persuasion, finally resorts to conquest. The world is beyond His control and does not move in accord with His slightest wish; and men are other than His agents. His supremacy may never be threatened; His absolute rule may be reestablished; but there are other wills in the world than His, wills which are independent of His will, and which are most often contrary to it. <sup>1)</sup>

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 1) See Mozley, "The Augustinian Doctrine of Predestination", p. 155.



## DEPENDENCE ON SCRIPTURE.

Strangely enough, however, this latter is not the picture of God which we find in Paul; nor is it the one we find dominant in the teachings of Our Lord. With all His witness to the love of the Father, Jesus seldom, if ever, gives us the impression that any act of God's is futile. Especially is this true if we look to His teachings in the Fourth Gospel. As a matter of fact, in spite of its prevalence in Christian theology, this is not, I think, the dominant teaching of the Scriptures at all; though, of course, one's opinion on this point may be largely affected by personal temperament and a personal scale of religious values. Some people seem to be of an indeterminist temperament, and they find Christianity in accord with their desires. Others have no longing for a "William James universe", and they find the glory and majesty and power of God shining from every page of Holy Writ and evidencing itself in every event of daily life. Both conceptions are to be found in Scripture, - probably because the writers, like other men, were of different types and temperaments, had different religious experiences, and occasionally, - again like other men, - themselves changed from one view to another according as they were

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impressed by different aspects of life.

One thing is clear: neither the Hebrews nor the early Christians could understand the existence of evil in a world created by a good God. Job, the Psalmist, and Isaiah, may have occasionally struck a very bold note; but they were all loath to place the responsibility for sin upon the Creator, and generally it is shifted to the creature in a fashion similar to that in the 3rd chapter of Genesis. But how the responsibility for it can rest solely upon the creature in a world created and governed by an omnipotent and omniscient God, is a matter they could never decide. It would perhaps be safe to say that the dominant conception of God in the Scriptures is the deterministic one of an Omnipotent and Omniscient Sovereign whose purposes are sure of fulfilment, and that the indeterministic element here, as in Calvin, comes in only as an incomplete and inharmonious answer to the difficulty felt in connection with the problem of evil. Neither element is carried to its logical extreme; but because the latter leads ultimately in a thoroughly rational universe to a cosmological dualism which is at variance with the evident monotheistic conviction of both the Hebrew and

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Christian writers,<sup>1)</sup> it cannot be looked upon as other than the minor and secondary element in their religious thought.

Calvin, of course, following Augustine, stressed the deterministic element; but, as we have seen, he could never quite free himself from the other as well. Striving to systematize the teaching of Scripture, he was aware of the same difficulty which had puzzled the Palestinian writers, and he attempts to push it as far back as possible. But he can never eliminate it; and perhaps he never quite clearly perceived the distinction between the two conceptions, and their contradictory character. He is certainly unable to reconcile them. But his complete dependence upon Scripture is probably what prevents him seeing the full force of the contradiction. For him the teaching of Scripture was a unity. Apparent inconsistencies were only apparent; they could not be real. If we could not solve the difficulties presented, it was only because we could not pierce the veil of the Divine mysteries. God had given us in His Word all the truth it was well for us to know. It was definitely

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1) One is not entering here into the controversy as to exactly at what date in Hebrew history the monotheistic conviction prevailed; it certainly prevailed in later times and was the point of view from which until recently the whole of the Old Testament was interpreted.

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wrong for us to be curious to learn more than He had seen fit to reveal. One thing was certain: nothing which He had revealed could possibly be untrue. Therefore Calvin inherited both elements of the Scriptural teaching and struggled with them as best he could. To one of them he gave his heart's completest allegiance; but loyalty to God and his Christian faith forced him to retain the other as well. However often he may be just on the point of boldly declaring that God is perfectly able to bear the responsibility for sin Himself, feeling forced to this declaration by the logic of his own argument, he yet never quite goes so far; and we find him elsewhere qualifying his position by returning to what was also his inherited conviction, namely, that sin must be the act of the creature alone, since, <sup>God,</sup> being wholly good, could not possibly be its author. He subordinates this latter as much as possible. He tries to believe that it is all of a piece with God's absolute sovereignty; but he can never quite make it so. God the author of all things - except sin: that is as far as he can go. The motive for making sin ~~the~~ the one exception is perfectly plain. But how it can be so, is a question Calvin never clearly answers.



Attempt at Reconciliation: A Mechanic and His Machine.

Calvin attempts to reconcile the conflicting elements of his theology, and the two conceptions of God which he has inherited from Hebrew thought, by resorting to that peculiar orthodox combination of God's transcendence and immanence by which God creates the world and then in His providence is forever interfering with its natural movement, - a view which resembles nothing so much as the idea of a mechanic who is always 'tinkering with the machine which he has made. According to this conception God neither makes the world (by which we mean not just the physical 'world', but the whole world of human affairs) so it will run properly of its own accord, nor is He continually working out His purposes through every part of it to the same extent. Calvin would have us believe that the laws of Nature ~~are~~ the laws of God, but God must step in and act directly at times - simply because Nature is apparently an inadequate expression of His will, and consequently, without His guiding hand the world would not go as it should. Calvin concurs in the assertion of Augustine that

"God retains, hidden in himself, the causes of some of his actions, which He has not intermingled with his created things,"

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and that

"These causes He brings out to their effects; not by that operation of his providence, by which He has appointed certain natures and their powers to be, and to act; but by that operation, by which He rules and directs, as He will, the creatures that He has made." 1)

But why the world will not run properly of its own accord after God has made it, is not clear. And neither is it at all clear how a God to whom Time has no direct significance, - to whom Past and Future are always Present, - can Himself participate in the activities of a world which is in Time; nor is it clear how, if He does participate in its activities, its whole movement is not as much His direct activity as any part. If all events depend upon the Divine decree, it is difficult to see how God can be in ~~anyone~~ of them more than in all others. And it is extremely difficult to see how it can be the nature of things to 'go wrong', if God is the one ultimately responsible for the 'nature of things'. If we adhere to the idea of the Fall, as it is presented to us in orthodox theology, the only explanation of history consistent with Calvinism seems to be the contention that God creates, overthrows, and redeems at least a part of that which He has Himself overthrown.

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1) "Calvin's Calvinism"., Part II., p. 27.

## CONCLUSION.

The conclusion we must come to is that Calvin, through his dual approach to theology, becomes involved in a fundamental inconsistency with regard to the Problem of Evil, which with his complete dependence on Scripture prevents him from ever reconciling the dual conception of God which runs through all the Bible and all Christian theology: so that his system of thought contains definitely indeterministic elements in spite of the marked trend of his major doctrines toward Determinism.

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THE SOURCES OF CALVIN'S TEACHING.The Bible.

Calvin's dependence upon the Bible is a matter that needs no argument, and the burden of proof certainly rests upon any who would contend that the dependence is not genuine. Calvin professes a supremely high regard for Scripture, and the whole of his work bears out his profession. At the very beginning of the Institutes he contends that man cannot know himself unless he also knows God,<sup>1)</sup> and later he declares that man cannot know God truly apart from the Scriptures; for he says,

"The Scripture, collecting in our minds the otherwise confused notions of Deity, dispels the darkness, and gives us a clear view of the true God." 2)

And he concurs in what he declares to be the testimony of the Word itself,

"that the Scripture discovers God to us as the creator of the world, and declares what sentiments we should form of him, that we may not be seeking after a deity in a labyrinth of uncertainty." 3)

going so far as to affirm that

"no man can have the least knowledge of true and sound doctrine, without having been a disciple of the Scripture." 4)

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- 1) Institutes, Book I, ch. 1.  
 2) and 3) Ibid., ch. 6, par. 1.  
 4) Ibid., par. 2.



His whole theology is merely an attempt to systematize the teaching of the Bible under the four heads of the Apostles' Creed. He seeks to substantiate every one of his doctrines, relating to the Father, the Son, the Holy Spirit, and the Church, by clear proofs from the Word, and the pages of his writings are filled with Biblical references. That he does not just use Scripture to commend to other people doctrines which he has derived from other sources, is made fairly evident by his contention that in it is revealed all that it is necessary or useful for man to know and that all desire to pry into matters not herein revealed is idle and sinful curiosity. His position is that one must believe all that is taught in Scripture and never go beyond the teaching of Scripture on matters with which it deals at all. In the of his treatises<sup>1)</sup> he remarks:

"I do not so approach (God's Secret Counsel) as to wish, by an insolent curiosity to search into those things which God wills to keep deeply hidden in himself. But that which the Scripture openly declares, I embrace with a sure faith, and look upon with reverence."

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1) Def. of Secret Prov. of God, "Calvin's Calvinism," Part 2. See also Institutes, Book 3, ch. 21. In the

## DEPENDENCE ON SCRIPTURE.

There can be little **doubt**, I think, but that Calvin's doctrines are to be found in Scriptures. It is plainly **the** teaching of the Bible that God is the Creator and Governor of the world, and the common acceptance of all Christians through the ages of the doctrines of Creation and Providence in some form or other is ample proof that Calvin's profession to derive them from Scripture is neither a pose nor a peculiarity. There may be some question with regard to Calvin's strict form of the doctrine of Providence, and many Christians may be doubtful as to whether or not the Bible teaches that every event is decreed by God; but individual texts in support of this teaching are not wanting, as a glance at the marginal references in chapter XVI of the First Book of the Institutes will show. The Hebrews very definitely believed that

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 "Congregation on Election", "Calvinism by Calvin", he declares:

"As soon as God has broken up the road we must stop there at once. And thus let us know it belongs to God to declare to us, what he wishes to be known and manifest; and to us it belongs, to receive it with all humility, and so to enquire no farther," (pp. 90, 91).

"The earth is the Lord's,  
and the fulness thereof;  
The world, and they that dwell therein." 1)

If any one doubts this, let him reread the Book of Job; and if he feels that there is still no warrant for such a view in the New Testament, let him again carefully consult the Epistle to the Romans. The Hebrews and the early Christians very definitely felt that the world and men were dependent upon God, and that such apparent mishaps as the invasions of enemies and the unbelief of Israel were matters which served some purpose of Divine Providence; while the Master Himself taught that even such comparatively insignificant matters as the fall of sparrows and the number of the hairs of one's head were things not too small for the concern and direction of our Father.

When it comes to the doctrine of Total Depravity a good many people may feel that here surely Calvin has little Scriptural ground to stand upon. But to think this is to forget the 51st Psalm, the history of Israel in the wilderness, with the defection even of Moses, and all their subsequent depravity, the crucifixion of our Lord, together with certain assertions of

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1) Psalms 24:1.

Paul in the Epistles to the Ephesians, to the Romans, and to the Corinthians, and the words of Jesus in the 6th chapter of John (vv. 40, 65) to the effect that no man could believe in Him except God gave him special grace.

And with regard to the doctrine of Irresistible Grace, we find Jesus in the same chapter of John saying,

"All that which the Father giveth me shall come unto me; and him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out." (John 6:37)

The conversion of Paul (Acts 9) is a case in point; and God's promise to give a new heart to His people and to put His Spirit within them to cause them to walk in His statutes, is also substantiation for the Calvinistic view. But it is impossible to go over all the particular passages. If one questions the Scriptural foundations of Calvinism he must study the Institutes and the particular treatises and note for himself Calvin's use of texts and see if he quotes enough of them, correctly interprets them, and really does draw his doctrine from them.

If one doubts the Calvinistic doctrine of Gratuitous Justification, let him try to refute it from Paul's Epistles to the Romans and to the Galatians; and the exercise may convince him that not only are there certain Scriptural difficulties in the way of the refutation, but



that there are some definite teachings of Paul which seem to support the position of Calvin. And the same may be said for the Calvinistic doctrines of Good Works and Prayer, though the latter of these is a minor doctrine and more in need of alignment with the general Calvinistic system than an actual bulwark of it. The Calvinistic doctrine of Good Works, however, I think, will be found to be strictly Pauline.

The real test for Calvinism comes, though, in the consideration of the doctrine of Predestination. Most Christians will have little complaint as to the Biblical grounds of the other doctrines so long as they are not carried to the extent of supporting this doctrine of God's eternal election of some to eternal life and the rejection of others to damnation.

It can scarcely be denied, however, that there is the very evident teaching of election in the Bible. But a good many people would limit it to the Divine election of a nation or a tribe. That Israel throughout is considered a chosen people, an elect nation, cannot be overlooked by anyone. It may be explained away as merely the opinion of the Israelites; but it is nevertheless most clearly the teaching of the Bible. The whole history

of Abraham, of Isaac, of Jacob, is a history of God's narrowing election. One may point out with Paul that it was not the election of a people to eternal life but merely to outward privileges. But the privileges were spiritual opportunities and religious privileges, and they must have had some effect upon the individual's chances of eternal life. The knowledge of God and of His law, presented as peculiar to the Hebrews, would not be worthless. If Israel were in any sense chosen by God above other nations for the gift of true religious knowledge, this is a piece of Divine discrimination quite along the same line as the more extreme personal election to eternal life itself.

In the prophets one does find the foreshadowing of a time when the whole people, or at least a remnant, shall be led by God into the ways of moral perfection; but the whole tone of the Old Testament is so national and "worldly" that one would not expect to find there in clear detail the distinctly Christian doctrine of individual salvation through personal faith. The real question is: Is this also a matter of Divine election, or does it depend upon the individual's own free choice?

To find an answer to this question we shall have to look to the New Testament.

One does not have to read far in some of Paul's Epistles before he comes across what certainly appears to be this doctrine. At the very beginning of Ephesians (chapter 1, verses 3-5) we find these words:

"Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ: even as he chose us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blemish before him in love: having foreordained us unto adoption as sons through Jesus Christ unto himself, according to the good pleasure of his will." 1)

And in 2 Timothy 1:8,9, we find Paul saying to his young disciple:

"Be not ashamed therefore of the testimony of our Lord, nor of me his prisoner: but suffer hardship with the gospel according to the power of God; who saved us, and called us with a holy calling, not according to our works, but according to his own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before times eternal." 2)

And in the 9th chapter of Romans (14-21) we read:

"What shall we say then? Is there unrighteousness with God? God forbid. For he saith to Moses, I will have mercy on whom I have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I have compassion. So then it is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that hath mercy. For

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1),2). Quoted from the American Revised Version. Italics mine. So throughout this part of the chapter.

the Scripture saith unto Pharaoh, For this very purpose did I raise thee up, that I might show in thee my power, and that my name might be published abroad in all the earth. So then he hath mercy on whom he will, and whom he will he hardeneth. Thou wilt say unto me, Why doth he still find fault? For who withstandeth his will? Nay but, O man, who art thou that repliest against God? Shall the thing formed say to him that formed it, Why didst thou make me thus? Or hath not the potter a right over the clay, from the same lump to make one part a vessel unto honor, and another unto dishonor?"

And again in Romans 11:33-36, Paul says:

"O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and the knowledge of God! how unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past tracing out! For who hath known the mind of the Lord? or who hath been his counsellor? or who hath first given to him, and it shall be recompensed unto him again? For of him, and through him, and unto him, are all things. To him be the glory for ever. Amen."

And in 1 Corinthians 1:26-31 we read:

"For behold your calling, brethren, that not many wise after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, are called: but God chose the foolish things of the world, that he might put to shame them that are wise; and God chose the weak things of the world, that he might put to shame the things that are strong; and the base things of the world, and the things that are despised, did God choose, yea and the things that are not, that he might bring to nought the things that are: that no flesh should glory before God. But of him are ye in Christ Jesus, who was made unto us wisdom from God, and righteousness and sanctification, and redemption: that according as it is written, He that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord."

Again, Paul commends himself to Titus (chapter 1, verse 1)



as

"Paul,<sup>a</sup>/servant of God, and an apostle of Jesus Christ, according to the faith of God's elect."

And he is forever speaking of his own apostleship as due to God's special grace.

To show that such phrases are not peculiar to Paul among the apostles, let us look at Peter's salutation in his first Epistle. He begins his writing with the words:

"Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ, to the elect who are sojourners of the Dispersion in Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia, according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, in sanctification of the Spirit, unto obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ: Grace to you and peace be multiplied."

But now someone may say that these are only casual phrases taken out of their context and that they do not really mean what they are interpreted to mean. It is really not a question of interpretation when one considers such expressions by themselves. They very definitely express what may be called a Predestinarian view of God's relation to men in Christ, and one wonders how such a view could be more clearly expressed. Yet it is true that one must look at the whole of a man's teaching to make sure that some other meaning is not attached to the words than the one which they appear to have when taken

by themselves. But if one looks at the teaching of Paul as a whole, he will discover, I think, that these are not just chance expressions which do not really disclose the apostle's true view. The whole Pauline doctrine of salvation by grace, which is the core of Romans and Galatians, and the background for all the other epistles, is one which is in perfect harmony with the doctrine of Predestination. In fact the logic of gratuitous salvation seems to force Paul to Predestination, whether he ever gave verbal expression to the latter doctrine or not.

But if there is any question of the fact that Paul did actually give verbal expression to the doctrine of Predestination, one is led to inquire how it is possible to express the doctrine any more clearly and succinctly than in the following passage from the 8th chapter of Romans (28-33):

"And we know that to them that love God all things work together for good, even to them that are called according to his purpose. For whom he foreknew, he also foreordained to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the first born among many brethren: and whom he foreordained, them he also called: and whom he called, them he also justified: and whom he justified, them he also glorified. What shall we say to these things? If God is for us, who is against us? He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for

us all, how shall he not also with him freely give us all things? Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifieth."

Calvin's formulation of the doctrine may be more detailed than Paul's; but the germ of it is certainly to be discovered in Paul. And regardless of what one may think, the Pauline Epistles are still in the New Testament, and thus conformity with their teaching gives some claim to a doctrine's being Biblical.

However, if one wished to distinguish between Paul's theology and our Lord's on this point, he would do well to consider some of the sayings of the Master. For instance the following:

"No man can come to me, except the Father that sent me draw him: and I will raise him up in the last day." (John 6:44);

"For this cause have I said unto you, that no man can come unto me, except it be given unto him of the Father." (John 6:65); "I pray not for the world, but for those whom thou hast given me; for they are thine." (John 17:9); "Neither did this man sin, nor his parents; but that the works of God should be made manifest in him." (John 9:3).

And the author of the Fourth Gospel himself says in trying to explain the Jews' rejection of Christ:

"But though he had done so many signs before them, yet they believed not on him: that the word of Isaiah the prophet might be fulfilled, which he spake,

Lord, who hath believed our report?

And to whom hath the arm of the Lord been revealed?

For this cause they could not believe, for that

Isaiah said again,

He hath blinded their eyes, and  
he hardened their heart;

Lest they should see with their eyes,  
and perceive with their heart,

And should turn,

And I should heal them.

These things said Isaiah, because he saw his glory;  
and he spake of him." (John 12:37-41)

But, lest some one should say that this is merely  
the idea of the author of the Fourth Gospel, and not  
at all the true mind of Christ, let us notice two sayings  
of Jesus recorded by Matthew. In Matthew 13:10-17 we  
read:

"And the disciples came, and said unto him, Why  
speakest thou unto them in parables? And he  
answered and said unto them, Unto you it is given to  
know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, but to  
them it is not given. For whosoever hath not, from  
him shall be taken away even that which he hath.  
Therefore speak I to them in parables; because  
seeing they see not, and hearing they hear not,  
neither do they understand. And unto them is  
fulfilled the prophecy of Isaiah, which saith,

By hearing ye shall hear, and shall  
in no wise understand;

And seeing ye shall see, and shall  
in no wise perceive:

For this people's heart is waxed gross,

And their ears are dull of hearing,

And their eyes they have closed;

Lest haply they should perceive with their  
eyes,

And hear with their ears,

And understand with their heart,

And should turn again,

And I should heal them.



But blessed are your eyes, for they see; and your ears, for they hear. For verily I say unto you, that many prophets and righteous men desired to see the things which ye see, and saw them not; and to hear the things which ye hear, and heard them not."

And in Matthew 15:13 Jesus says,

"Every plant which my heavenly Father planted not, shall be rooted up."

In the former of these passages from Matthew we have Jesus' own interpretation of the same prophecy of Isaiah which John has applied to His rejection, and however much of sad irony there may be in the reference to his teaching in parables, it yet shows that the Master Himself felt that the ultimate explanation went back to the decrees of the Father.

And that this view of God's relation to the affairs of the world was the one held in the early Church is shown by a few passages from the Acts. To begin with, in the 2nd chapter (verses 22-23), Peter says:

"Ye men of Israel, hear these words: Jesus of Nazareth, a man approved of God unto you by mighty works and wonders and signs which God did by him in the midst of you, even as ye yourselves know; him, being delivered up by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, ye by the hand of lawless men did crucify and slay."

In the 13th chapter, the 48th verse, we read:

"And as the Gentiles heard this, they were glad, and glorified the word of God: and as many as were ordained to eternal life believed."

And again, in the 14th verse of the 16th chapter:

"And a certain woman named Lydia, a seller of purple, of the city of Thyatira, one that worshipped God, heard us: whose heart the Lord opened to give heed unto the things which were spoken by Paul."

And in the 28th chapter, the 25th through the 28th verses, we find that Paul interprets the above quoted passage from Isaiah in exactly the same spirit as our Lord and John.

#### The Fault of Calvin's attitude toward the Scriptures.

It would seem, then, that there is, after all, some Biblical ground for Calvin's doctrines,<sup>1)</sup> and that there is a strong prima facie case for the genuineness of his profession of dependence upon the Scriptures. It is impossible for us to determine definitely whether he was trying to systematize the teaching of the Bible, or was trying to make the Bible support his teachings. In all probability, he, like every other **professedly** orthodox theologian, was trying to do both. There is no reason at all to suppose that he formed his opinions previously and then came to the Bible to secure its confirmation. The whole evidence of the Institutes, Tracts, and Commentaries,

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1) Those of the Church and State have already been sufficiently considered, and they are not of any great importance for the argument anyway, the real "bone of contention" being the doctrine of Predestination.

indicates the extent of his Bible study, and it is most unnatural to suppose that this study had no effect upon the forming of his ideas. Doubtless there are other influences in his thought, as we shall see; but as has already been pointed out, there is ample support for his doctrines in the Scriptures, and the very fact that he is so careful to secure their aid in the proof of his points, and often times rests his whole case upon their teaching, seems to indicate that this was done not just for effect upon a generation which knew comparatively little about them, and often cared less, but from a genuine desire to have his views conform to those of the Bible.

As a matter of fact his dependence upon the teaching of the Scripture, and his conviction with regard to its unity, forces certain difficulties upon him, from which he would be free otherwise. For instance there are certain texts which it is extremely difficult to fit into his scheme. But never once does he belittle the authority of God's Word. Sometimes he is forced, in consequence, to do a great deal of twisting of texts. But he gladly twists them rather than consciously acknowledge any discrepancy in God's Word. The doubtful point

is not regarding the contention that his own doctrines are Scriptural, but regarding his conviction that all the texts of Scripture may be fitted into an harmonious whole. He is undoubtedly guilty at times of trying to hammer a square text into a round hole, - and sometimes there is nothing at all left of the text when he is through with it. For example, in Book III., ch.19, paragraph 15 of the Institutes, in trying to explain

"Paul's injunction to obey magistrates 'not only for wrath, but also for conscience' sake",

he really shows, not that Paul means what he should mean, but that from a consideration of reason and other texts of Scripture what Paul apparently meant is not true. Which, only on the assumption that Paul could not make a mistake about anything, is the same as showing that his opponents' interpretation of this text, which is the natural one, is incorrect. Calvin's whole point here is that his opponent's interpretation cannot be correct, for if it is Paul's statement is patently false: but Paul's statements must be true; therefore Paul must mean something other than the text seems to say.

As a matter of fact, it would appear that Calvin, doubtless unwittingly, denies the verbal inerrancy of the



Scriptures when, in the same book of the Institutes, chapter 24, paragraph 9, he is referring to Jesus' assertion that none of His sheep is lost but the son of perdition; for he there remarks:

"Here is, indeed, some inaccuracy of expression, but the meaning is clear. For he was never reckoned among the sheep of Christ, as being really such, but only as he occupied the place of one."

Thus he presumes to criticise either the words of our Lord or of His recorder as inaccurate in themselves, because they do not mean exactly what according to Calvin's view they must mean. But he expresses himself as being convinced that this is actually what the Lord meant to say, - even if His words (as reported) were not well chosen. And in paragraph 16 of the same chapter we have him trying to "get round" Paul's assertion that

"God will have all men to be saved"

and Peter's that

"the Lord is not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance."

The context of the former of these may indicate that Paul is here speaking,

"not of individuals, but of orders of men,"

as Calvin contends; and if so, this probably does destroy

the force of the text as a weapon for his opponents. 1)

But his assertion that this text

"must be explained in a manner consistent with another, where God says, 'I will be gracious to whom I will be gracious, and I will show mercy on whom I will show mercy'",

is something which itself requires proof, and seems in no case to be of much effect, since this text in itself might very well mean that God may choose to save all, and that if He should, it would be nobody else's concern. And surely, when he takes up Peter's statement and begins to explain it by saying that

"the second clause furnishes an immediate solution of this difficulty; for the willingness that they should come to repentance must be understood in consistence with the general tenor of Scripture",

and then proceeds to try to show (something which the texts he quotes scarcely make beyond reasonable doubt) that God most certainly does not will that all should come to repentance, it appears as if all he had succeeded in doing was to refute the text itself and show that it simply is not true that

"the Lord is not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance."

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- 1) For a different treatment of this text, see Calvin's "Answer to a Libel against Predestination" in a volume of his sermons, translated by John Fielde, and published in London in 1579.

We have a similiar instance of Calvin's interpretation of difficult texts, in Book 11., chapter 5, paragraph 15, where he says:

"some other passages also are frequently objected, which show that God sometimes tries men by withdrawing the assistance of his grace, and waits to see what course they will pursue; as in Hosea: 'I will go and return to my place, till they acknowledge their offence, and seek my face.' It would be ridiculous, they say, for the Lord to consider, whether Israel would seek his face, unless their minds were flexible, capable of inclining either way, according to their own pleasure; as if it were not very common for God, in the prophets, to represent himself as despising and rejecting his people, till they should amend their lives. But what will our adversaries infer from such threats? If they maintain, that those who are deserted by God, are capable of converting themselves, they oppose the uniform declaration of Scripture."

And then Calvin proceeds to give an interpretation of this and similiar passages of the Testaments. The interpretation is not very convincing; but it is not with it that we are really concerned. Rather, the point to note is that here, as above, Calvin is begging the question. How is one to determine the 'general tenor of Scripture' and its 'uniform declarations' apart from such particular texts as these, which in the present case are simply made to conform to what is judged to be the uniform teaching of Scripture apart from any consideration of them? The

question to answer first is whether or not there is a 'uniform teaching of the Scripture', or merely a 'dominant trend'. But in settling this question one would have to consider just such texts as these dealt with, together with those apparently substantiating a different position; and it is certainly not just merely to assume at the outset that they must mean something which they apparently do not mean, simply because one is already determined that the teaching of Scripture shall be uniform and shall be such as the obvious interpretation, or implications, of these texts would contradict.

The trouble is that Calvin's whole attitude towards the Scriptures is at fault. Instead of his reliance upon them being open to question, it is rather the extent of his dependence which is of doubtful wisdom. Sometimes he hammers them into an impossible unity; at other times he is patently inconsistent rather than oppose their teaching. Now one need not discard the Scriptures in order to disagree with Calvin's view of them. They may have authority; they may be God's Word. They are; and they should be carefully studied accordingly. They are most certainly the historical foundation for Christianity, and



one might as well hope to discover the meaning of Christianity apart from them as to discover the meaning of Platonism, without ever reading Plato. But nevertheless, the Bible is apparently not any such unity as Calvin supposed; and one cannot dig in here and dig in there and be confident in every case of pulling up a text which is evidently consistent with every other one. There is a certain fundamental unity, perhaps; but it is on broad and rather general lines, and <sup>it</sup> does not seem that all the Biblical writers saw eye to eye on every slightest point. There may be very real disagreement about minor matters without necessitating more fundamental discrepancy

It does seem that the Bible simply is not to be understood from the Calvinistic assumption that the Holy Spirit is its one real author. It may be inspired; but this is no warrant for presuming that all the men who did the actual work of writings were mere amanuenses, who either understood what they wrote in the same way and meant to say exactly what Calvin understands by their words and wants to make them mean, or that they did not understand what they were writing but were merely putting it down for later generations to understand. These men understood what they wrote in the light of the learning of the time in

which they wrote it. They meant to say exactly what they do say, and they were expressing what they conceived to be their own ideas. They may have used figurative language, but they intended it to convey a very definite meaning, and it was a meaning for their own generation, to be understood in the light of the circumstances of their own day. They were not expressing theological propositions for 16th or 20th century disputation. They were trying to solve certain problems and discover certain truths, - in many instances the same problems and the same truths that 16th century theologians were concerned with; but they did not approach them in the same way, they did not work out any elaborate systems within the Bible itself, and they did not always succeed in solving the problem they were working on, nor did they always discover the truth they were seeking to discover. They had remarkable spiritual insight and a more profound knowledge of the mind of God than can be discovered elsewhere; but there were some depths they could not fathom. Calvin supposed that this was because God had only revealed what would be of use to us. He held that God had revealed all that we should know, and that we should ask for no more. He distinctly affirms that

"our wisdom ought to consist in embracing with gentle docility, and without any exception, all that is delivered in the sacred Scriptures." 1)

But all knowledge is not contained in the Bible, and to suppose that it is is to do the Bible itself a great injustice. God has revealed Himself in the world as well as in the Word, and we cannot limit ourselves to the views of the ancients on every point. We may still have a great deal to learn from them; and the revelation of God in Christ Jesus our Lord may indeed be final: but there is much even of religious truth that the Bible itself does not make clear.

For one thing it contains no solution of the problem of evil. This may indicate, as Calvin has supposed, that the solution is beyond the powers of human understanding; but one can justly ask for a proof of the supposition: and such a proof will force a man to go outside the Scripture for his materials and to grapple with the problem itself. Why is it beyond the powers of human understanding? To answer this question one must look at life itself. He may be helped to a deeper understanding of it by study of the Bible; but the Bible here is like a commentary, and the light it throws upon the 'text' is to be carefully

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1) Institutes, Book 1., ch. 18, par. 4.

examined in the light of a study of the 'text' itself, and the 'text' is in this instance life, or the world in which we live.

I think we have put our finger here upon the cause for the major inconsistency in the system of Calvin. 1) He found in the Scriptures the elements of a deterministic conception of God and the universe. He systematized them into his great doctrines of Creation and Providence and Predestination, and around these he built one of the most logical systems of Christian theology which has ever been developed. It was not so perfectly logical in every statement and detail as some of his great admirers who have never even looked into the ~~Institutes~~ would suppose. But it is a far more commanding system than most of his opponents have been able to construct. It had one thorn in the flesh, however, which has always been a source of weakness to it: the Problem of Evil. Calvin could get around this no better than the early Gnostics. And the Scriptures offered him no help. In fact it seems to be his complete dependence upon them which kept him from attacking the problem with the full force of his perception that the solution lay somewhere along the line of the distinction between ends. The Bible held

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1) See ch. 8 above.



out no such solution. Isaiah may have said that Jehovah made peace and created evil, 1) and Calvin may have used the passage to support his contention that all events are decreed by God; 2) but in Ecclesiastes (chapter 7, v.29) it says:

"Behold, this only have I found: that God made man upright; but they have sought out many inventions,"

and Calvin took this to indicate that God made men perfectly good and they created evil. He never seems really to deal with this passage from Isaiah. He is aware of the fact that the Scriptures present God as being above all evil, regardless of what He does, and he feels that this must be so. God cannot sin. But how, then, can He will the existence of that which is evil? The Bible does not say. The Bible says: All things are of God; God is wholly good; Sin is real; God hates Sin. How to reconcile these statements is beyond Calvin. How to reconcile the facts upon which they are each based, was beyond the ancient Hebrews. One time they emphasised one aspect of the difficulty, at another time another, according to the point of view of the individual author or the trend of the same author's thought at different times. With all their occasional use of deterministic conceptions, their language and thought is almost

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1) Isaiah 45:7.

2) Institutes, Bk.I, ch.17, par.8.

universally pluralistic, and the blame for sin is always attached to men. In the classic explanation of the origin of evil, in the 3rd chapter of Genesis, sin is presented as the work of the devil and man. Calvin simply rests here. How this could be the ultimate explanation is not clear. That it was merely the rather sketchy and figurative solution of an ancient people given to sketchy and figurative thought, never entered seriously into Calvin's mind. It was God's explanation of the origin of evil; it was therefore final! Nothing more need be said upon the subject; nothing more could be said upon the subject. He therefore incorporated it into his system; in spite of the fact that as it stood it had no place there.

Calvin systematized the thought of the Scriptures; he worked out its details; he got no nearer a solution of the great problems of religious thought than did the writers of the books of the two Testaments.

### Paul

Of all individual writers of the Bible, Calvin probably has the greatest dependence upon Paul; because Paul was the theologian par excellence of the Scriptures. John developed a profound Christology and Soteriology; but the

nearest thing to a complete system is to be found in the Epistles of Paul. It is not arranged in text-book form; it must be pieced together from the various letters: but from all of them together there does come to us a rather complete and definite view. And in the main Calvinism is but an elaboration of Paulinism. Paul carried his belief in Providence to the extent of an affirmation of Predestination. But he also was convinced that God could do no wrong. He was forced, therefore, to grapple with the problem of evil.

"Is there unrighteousness with God? God forbid."

"Why doth he still find fault? For who withstandeth his will? Nay but, O man, who art thou that repliest against God?"

"O the depth, of the riches both of the wisdom and the knowledge of God! how unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past tracing out!"

Perhaps as Augustine believed Paul put his finger on the solution of the difficulty 1) when he answered one troubling question by asking another:

"Nay but, O man, who art thou that repliest against God?".

Here may be the answer. Paul, as Augustine contended, may not be merely trying to avoid the issue; he may be giving the real answer to the problem. But if so, he leaves it still dim and obscure. Perhaps the answer to his question, and

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1) ~~Treatise~~ on the Eternal Predestination of God, "Calvin's Calvinism", Part I, p.53.

the answer to the other to which it is a reply, is that we are nothing really. But Paul does not say this. He leaves the matter still a mystery. Perhaps he saw some answer to it and hints at it here. Perhaps for him also, there was on this point only darkness. This much he certainly affirms: we are only God's creatures, clay in the hand of the Great Potter.

Augustine.

Next to the Bible, Calvin's chief source of reliance is upon Augustine. Between Calvin and Augustine there is such a bond of sympathy and agreement that it would almost seem that they are of one mind. In fact, in the Treatise on the Eternal Predestination of God ("Calvin's Calvinism," Part I, pp.20f.). Calvin says:

"In a word, Augustine is so wholly with me, that if I wished to write a confession of my faith, I could do so, with all fulness and satisfaction to myself, out of his writings."

And the whole treatise is so filled with quotations from Augustine in support of his points that one can well believe the truth of his profession of agreement. There is scarcely a page but what Calvin turns at least once to the writings of Augustine to find corroboration for his own



views, or their more adequate expression; for it seems that he is so pleased with the words of Augustine that he prefers them to his own. Calvin himself acknowledges this delight in the expression of Augustine and his awareness of the greater worth of his words in the eyes of his own contemporaries, for he says on one occasion, 1) in replying to those who seem dissatisfied with his own answers to their objections:

"But if there be any ultramorose ones, who are not yet satisfied; and who consider that there is more weight in the testimony of Augustine (which acknowledgment I have often and willingly made myself); I will produce his sentiments on this subject, in his own words; thereby testifying my own assent to their truth."

Similar reliance upon and agreement with Augustine are manifest in the treatises on Providence, as well. Several pages of that appended to the principal Predestination tract are almost wholly from Augustine, 2) and in his later refutation of ~~calumnies~~ he maintains that if his opponent will take the trouble to investigate the matter, he will find that his (Calvin's)

~~manner~~ and substance of argument are precisely the same with those of that holy father, of happy memory," Augustine. 3)

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- 1) "Calvin's Calvinism," Part I, pp. 129f.
  - 2) "Calvin's Calvinism," Part II, pp. 23-27.
  - 3) Ibid. p. 42. on p. 43 it is Calvin's further contention that ~~calumnies~~ similar to those against him were hurled at Augustine in his day.

In the Institutes he refers to Augustine and his words almost as often. He finds certain things in common with the rest of the Fathers, and throughout indicates a remarkable knowledge of their writings; but he has much fault to find with all of them except the great Carthaginian. In him alone does he find a truly congenial spirit.

Undoubtedly Augustine had a profound influence upon Calvin. His words are forever in Calvin's mouth, and Calvin holds his opinions to be worthy of the greatest consideration. But Calvin is something more than the shadow of Augustine, and he does not hesitate to disagree with his master when he thinks his master wrong. It is not often that he finds any reason for disagreement; but when he does, he has no hesitancy in saying so. For one thing he is not exactly pleased with some of Augustine's ideas, about how man is made in the image of God, for he says,

"That speculation of Augustine is far from being solid, that the soul is a mirror of the Trinity, because it contains understanding, will, and memory." 1)

This is practically his only definite notice of disagreement with the great Latin Father; but it indicates that his doctrines were his own and not just somebody else's transcribed in a later generation.

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1) Institutes, Bk I, ch.15, par. 4.

cribe Yet there are decided points of difference between Calvin and Augustine. Calvin would, of course, have had as little sympathy with Augustine's earlier writings in defence of free will as Augustine himself had later. And while it may have been true that Calvin could have framed a complete confession of the essentials of his faith from the writings of Augustine; it is not quite so certain that he could have found all the teachings of his faith in Augustine, or that he could have subscribed to all that is to be found in Augustine's writings.

According to Professor James Orr, in his article on Calvinism in the Encyclopedia of Religion and Ethics,

"Regeneration is for Augustine an act effected through baptism; for Calvin, it is effected through the agency of the word and spirit of God. --- Next, Augustine's doctrine of predestination was necessarily crossed by his doctrine of baptismal regeneration. --- For Augustine, therefore, the test of predestination to life, or of election, was found, not in regeneration, but in perseverance. The elect have given to them the grace to persevere. Calvin entirely separates himself from this view. Regeneration is a spiritual work wrought in the souls of the elect, and of them alone. The elect persevere, but the seed of their perseverance is already im-

planted in them in regeneration. The sacramentarian element is completely purged out from this doctrine." And Professor Orr continues,

"There is one more distinction. Augustine, with justice, confines predestination to life, The word is thus synonymous with election. Calvin, on the other hand, speaks boldly of a twofold predestination - a predestination to salvation and a predestination to destruction." 1)

It is true that Augustine was a great deal more of a sacramentarian than was Calvin, and this is a point where Calvin would probably be out of sympathy with his predecessor. But whether or not there is such a great difference between them with regard to the test of predestination as Professor Orr seems to think, is a matter that strikes one as being not quite clear. The test of regeneration, after all, would be perseverance, and the seeds of perseverance would have to be sown in regeneration, if it were a real regeneration. But there does seem to be a difference between Augustine and Calvin with regard to the matter of assurance; for as Professor Harnack points out, 2)

"according to Augustine, no one can be certain that he possesses this grace"

which is irresistible and enables one to persevere, and he is not so much concerned about assurance; while for Calvin

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- 1) Hastings' Encyc. of Rel. and Ethics, vol.3, pp.150f.
  - 2) Harnack, History of Dogma, vol.5, p.210, footnote.



it is a matter of first importance, and his whole preaching of predestination and election is to bring assurance of perseverance to those who believe in Christ. 1) According to Calvin, election is confirmed by God's call, 2) - not the mere hearing of the word, but the accepting of it, - and the assurance of our election is in the Son, in our sense of communion with Him and our acceptance of His promises of sustenance and protection. But since some who appear to believe fall away, Calvin contends that in the last analysis we must say that

"such persons never adhered to Christ with that same confidence of heart which, we say, gives us an assurance of our election." 3)

Assurance of salvation, then, for Calvin, comes through assurance of faith. But since one's assurance of faith depends upon the perseverance of faith, there is really no great point of difference between the thought of Calvin and that of Augustine, though they each stress different aspects of the same doctrine. They do have a different point of view with regard to assurance; but there is no fundamental disagreement with regard to the doctrine of predestination on this point.

Professor Orr's second point of difference is a more important one, because it relates not merely to assurance of election, but to the very scope of God's predestination.

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- 1) Institutes, Bk.III., ch.21, par.1.
  - 2) Institutes, Bk.III., ch.24.
  - 3) Ibid., ch.24, par.7.

However, one may be inclined to disagree with Professor Orr's judgment as to the greater justice of Augustine's position. The logic of the case is clearly against Augustine and in favor of Calvin; and this is the one great advance which Calvin makes over Augustine. Here Calvin carries the logic of their common position a step farther, than either Paul or Augustine does; for Paul leaves the matter obscure, and Augustine draws back. But both are committed to it, because as Calvin says,

"election itself could not exist without being opposed to reprobation," 1)

unless all are saved, which Augustine does not teach. 1

In the same place he remarks,

"Many, indeed, as if they wished to avert odium from God, admit election in such a way as to deny that any one is reprobated. But this is puerile and absurd. --- God is said to separate those whom he adopts to salvation. To say that others obtain by chance, or acquire by their own efforts, that which election alone confers on a few, will be worse than absurd. Whom God passes by, therefore, he reprobates, and from no other cause than his determination to exclude them from the inheritance which he predestines for his children. --- We have heard that hardening proceeds from the Divine power and will, as much as mercy. Unlike the persons I have mentioned, Paul never strives to excuse God by false allegations; he only declares that it is unlawful for a thing formed to quarrel with its maker."

With regard to the development of Augustine's doctrine of grace we quote the following from Professor Harnack. 2)

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- 1) Institutes, Bk. III., ch.23, par.1.
  - 2) History of Dogma, vol.5, p.168.

He declares:

"Augustine's doctrine of grace and sin was constructed independently of the Pelagian controversy. It was substantially complete when he entered the conflict; but he was by no means clear as to its application in separate questions in the year of his conversion. At the time of his fight with Manichaeism (see the *Tres libri de libero arbitrio*) he had rather emphasised, following the tradition of the Church teachers, the independence of human freedom, and had spoken of original sin merely as inherited evil. It was his clerical office, a renewed study of Romans, and the criticism of his spiritual development, as instituted in the Confessions, that first led him to the Neoplatonic Christian conviction that all good, and therefore faith, came from God, and that man was only good and free in dependence upon God. Thus he gained a point of view which he confessed at the close of his life he had not always possessed, and which he opposed to the earlier, erroneous conceptions that friends and enemies frequently reminded him of. It can be said that his doctrine of grace, in so far as it was a doctrine of God, was complete as early as A.D.387; but it was not, in its application to Bible history, or to the problem of conversion and sanctification (in the Church), before the beginning of the fifth century. It can also be shown that he was at all times slightly influenced by the popular Catholic view, and this all the more as he was not capable of drawing the whole consequences of his system, which, if he had done so, would have led to determinism."

For again, it is Harnack's opinion that

"The carrying out of the conception of predestinating grace, which should be no more than a sentiment, confined to himself, of the redeemed, leads to a determinism that conflicts with the gospel and imperils the vigour of our sense of freedom." 1)

Now one may not be so sure that if the 'sentiment of

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- 1) History of Dogma, vol.5, p.218. For a very full and able treatment of Augustine's doctrines, see Mozley, "The Augustinian Doctrine of Predestination."

predestinating grace' has a true ground in fact, 'the conception' should not be carried to its logical conclusion, even if it does conflict with what some people conceive to be the gospel, and even if it does imperil the vigor of our sense of freedom. If our sense of freedom is a mistake, its vigor should be imperilled; and any benefit previously derived from an erroneous sense of freedom may be expected to be offset by even greater benefit from a true sense of dependence on God. There is no need avoiding the logic of the facts merely to preserve the vigor of our sense of freedom, if the sense of freedom has not enough of the vigor of truth to stand by itself. The thing to note is that in Harnack's opinion Augustine's doctrine of predestination logically developed leads to determinism. If this is so, and Augustine's doctrine is true, there seems no worth in Professor Orr's contention that Augustine justly confines predestination to salvation.

But Professor Orr has certainly hit upon an important difference between the teachings of the two men. And Professor Harnack cites another when he says,

"The infralapsarian doctrine of predestination, as understood by Augustine, is very different from Calvin's." 1)

For while Calvin is not clear on the order of the foreordir-

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1) History of Dogma, vol. 5, p. 216, footnote



nation of events, he certainly leans towards a supralapsarian view, which again is far more logical than the more "half-way" view of Augustine. Yet as we have already seen, it is Calvin's inconsistency with regard to the origin of evil which is the great weakness of his whole system. His contention for Adam's having real freedom of the will, though his admission that God decreed his fall makes this contention less excusable for him, lays him open to the charges similiar to those which Harnack brings against Augustine, when he maintains that Augustine's

"Whole doctrine of the primitive state, like all teaching on this subject, is full of contradictions; for we have here a grace that is meant to be actual, and is yet merely a condition, i.e., it by no means makes a man good, but only leaves scope to the will. Thereby the whole doctrine of grace is upset; for if there is a grace at all which only produces the posse non peccare, is not this the sole significance of all grace? and if that is correct, were not the Pelagians right? They, of course, maintained that grace was only a condition. Augustine's doctrine of grace in the primitive state (the adjutorium) is Pelagian, and contradicts his doctrine of grace elsewhere. We have here the clearest proof that it is impossible to construct a history from the standpoint of predestinating grace. Augustine falls back on the assumption that God wished to bestow on man a higher good than he had received at first. --- At the beginning and end (the primitive state and the Judgment) the moral view is set above the religious. The whole doctrine of predestinating irresistible grace is set in a frame incompatible with it. Thus Augustine is himself responsible if his Church in after times, arguing from the primitive

state and the Judgment (*secundum merita*), has eliminated practically his doctrine of gratia gratis data." 1)

Now one need not agree with Professor Harnack that Augustine's inconsistency here clearly proves that

"it is impossible to construct a history from the standpoint of predestinating grace";

for one might still wish to see the doctrine carried out to its logical limits to see if such a construction is actually impossible. But there can be no doubt that Augustine was inconsistent with regard to the condition of Adam; and that Calvin, in spite of his more supralapsarian tendency, was still "befogged" on the matter of Adam's condition, and in his explanation of the Fall laid himself open to the charge of similiar inconsistency.

There are other minor differences between Augustine and Calvin: as, for instance, that regarding the relation of the law to faith. As Harnack says, Augustine

"had no assured experience that the law prepared the way for wrath and despair."

And he adds,

"At this point Luther intervened." 2)

It is probable that Calvin drew from Luther; for at any rate he teaches that the law is only to prepare the way for faith.

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1) Op.cit.,p.216, footnote.

2) Ibid.,p.219, footnote.

or to take away all ground of excuse.<sup>1)</sup> There are the additional differences regarding the Atonement, penance, and the distinction between commands and counsels, together with certain views regarding purgatory and prayers for the dead. But the chief points of difference as far as we are concerned, are those derived from the fact that Augustine does not carry predestination to the eternal decreeing of destruction to the damned, and that he is infralapsarian in his treatment of the Fall, whereas Calvin includes damnation under predestination and is more supralapsarian with regard to the Fall, though he fails to deal with the problem of the origin of evil along lines consistent with a supralapsarian view.<sup>2)</sup>

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- 1) Institutes, Bk. II, ch5.
- 2) It is interesting to note Professor Warfield's and Professor Kuijper's points of difference between Augustine and Calvin: the former with regard to the testimony of the Spirit ("Galvin and the Reformation"), and the latter with regard to God's grace ("Calvinism," pp. 55f.). Both show that Augustine remained a Bishop regarding these matters and interposed the Church as a mediator between God and man, whereas Calvin developed a doctrine of the Spirit which left no room for human mediation. It is Kuijper's contention that Augustine's doctrine of Predestination presents religion "for the sake of man," whereas Calvin's presents it "for the sake of God."

The Stoics and Others.

In Dr. A. Mitchell Hunter's book on "The Teaching of Calvin," we find the following very important paragraph:

"Calvin of course found in Scripture his ultimate and decisive authority for the doctrine (of Predestination) on both its sides of election and reprobation. Nevertheless his mind had received a strong bias towards certain views on the subject from men whose early influence upon him had been very great. It is noteworthy that his first published writing, the Commentary on the Stoic Seneca's De Clementia, disclosed an intellectual sympathy with a philosopher whose fatalistic doctrine, though radically different from that of predestination, appealed to the same mental disposition. It was undoubtedly Augustine, however, who made the profoundest impression upon Calvin, not only in this particular but in many others. A rapid comparison with that Father's Anti-Pelagian writings is enough to show that Calvin reproduces in large measure his argumentation on the doctrine, the only considerable difference being that the later champion lays greater stress on the reprobation side of it. The influence of Luther<sup>1)</sup> could not but strongly reinforce the impression made upon him by Augustine. Calvin echoes the older Reformer in deprecating the attempt to explore the secrets of the divine will and in asserting the Christian duty of limiting ourselves to what is revealed in Scripture and through Christ. It may be that he was more indebted for the exact form of his views to LeFèvre whose teaching was transmitted through his pupil Roussel, one of Calvin's instructors. In LeFèvre's Commentary on Paul's Epp., the same attitude is assumed to the matter as Calvin subsequently adopted, especially in his insistence that all things, however mysterious, contribute to enhance the glory of God, the interest of His creatures being of only secondary moment. According to Calvin's own witness, however, it was Bucer who was most of all the informing mind and guiding spirit. 'Principally,' said he, 'I have wished to follow Bucer, man of holy memory.' But here again Calvin's independent mind would allow him

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- 1) Kuijper very properly maintains that "Luther can be interpreted without Calvin, but not Calvin without Luther." ("Calvinism," p.20)



to call no man master. Bucer, touched by the common repugnance, kept reprobation in the background, while Calvin kept it in the foreground in line with its better half, election. Calvin's convictions were not the result of his respect for the ipse dixit of any man, whatever his regard for him. Doubtless others disposed his mind to a more zealous and unhesitating adoption of views in harmony with theirs, but nothing save proof, based on grounds that approved themselves to him as incontrovertible, would produce the absolute certainty with which he held them. He was no parrot; he was one of those who, like Paul, can say, I believed, therefore do I speak. Nor was his acceptance of the doctrine due to the compulsion of mere logical syllogisms with the sovereignty of God as major premiss, any more than it was held by him with the jealous assertion of the professional theologian who wishes the children of his brain to command the homage of all. His convictions were of the heart as well as of the mind and rested on a variety of grounds." 1)

It is interesting to note the reference to Calvin's indebtedness to other men of the time of the Reformation. But chiefly interesting is the suggestion that he owes something to the early influence of the study of Seneca. It is impossible here to determine how much. As Dr. Hunter says, Calvin's doctrine of predestination is very different from the Stoic fatalism; yet both do appeal to the same type of mind. They are kindred answers to the same great questions that are ever troubling the minds of thoughtful men. Just as Stoic metaphysics was filled with inconsistencies, so we have seen Calvin's system not to be entirely free from them. But they were both

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1) Hunter, "The Teaching of Calvin," pp.93-93.

attempts to solve the great problems of life and of the universe on the line of Determinism; and their respective inconsistencies come in their deviations from this line. With all its deficiencies there was much in Stoicism that would appeal to Calvin. Its whole view of life, its stern stressing of the harsher virtues, its seeking for an ultimate rational foundation. Its natural congeniality would influence him to seek in the Scriptures the same elements adjusted to a different religious foundation.

It is the suggestion of Edwyn Bevan (in his "Stoics and Sceptics") that Paul himself might have been influenced in his youth by the Stoic teaching and the Stoic point of view, since Tarsus was at that time a strong Stoic centre, and that perhaps Stoicism, in turn, may owe something to the Semitic origin of Zeno its founder.<sup>1)</sup> There is indeed something which strikes the imagination in the similiarity between Paul quoting from the Stoics in Athens and Zeno coming to this same city some three centuries before from the same Syrian coast, to learn philosophy<sup>and</sup> later to preach his Stoic message with a similiar prophetic quality of utterance.

It is wholly a matter of conjecture; but there does seem to be a constitutional disposition with regard to these matters.

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1) Bevan, "Stoics and Sceptics," pp.14 and 20,21.

There are some men who crave freedom and long only for the possibility of what they call 'progress'. They desire a universe of change and uncertainty, the ultimate reality of Time; they would even welcome Chance in the physical order if it gave grounds for a belief in the Freedom of the Will. Such among us in recent times are William James and Bergson. But there are others who seek stability, who long for something which will never change, who crave order, and can only be happy in the thought of an eternal and inevitable plan for the whole universe. For such there is no joy in uncertainty; they prefer a certain and sure purpose to all the possibilities held out in the conception of Freedom. They have no love for Freedom as such; they do not believe it is the sole ground for the possibility of moral goodness; they seek for a meaning in life that is not dependent upon chance and uncertainty. Of such were some of the old Hebrew psalmists and prophets, of such were Zeno and Paul, Augustine and Calvin. They lean inevitably towards some form of Determinism. The Hebrews and the Christians among them differ much from the Hindus and the Buddhists; but still there is something in common even with these: an attitude of mind that seeks rest, assurance, peace, a haven at the heart of the universe from all the confusion

and change and strife in the world about us.

Is there any development of Determinism consistent with Theism and Christianity? Hinduism and Buddhism are shot through with conflicting ideas; Stoicism never succeeded in working out a consistent metaphysics; the Hebrews wavered between two views; Paul left much uncertain and obscure; Augustine drew back lest he accuse God of evil; and Calvin, bolder, approaching even nearer to a consistent conclusion of their common beliefs, himself wavered, and in his confusion of the issues chose the wrong road in his attempt to reach a solution of the great problem confronting them, - afraid, too, lest he be found guilty of accusing God of evil.

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## THE DEVELOPMENT OF CALVIN'S TEACHING.

## Chapter X.

THE DETERMINISM OF EDWARDS..His Development of Calvinism.

The Calvinistic system of doctrine was ably defended and the issues it raises substantially clarified in the subsequent Arminian controversy. And in this clarifying of issues, especially in the development of the Supra- and Sub-lapsarian schools, it may be supposed that a real advance was made over the teaching of Calvin himself. Certain decisions with regard to points left obscure by the founder had to be made, and were made, in accordance with the individual's decision as to whether he would follow Calvin's high road to the bitter end, or push farther along the by-path which Calvin himself withdrew into, lest he should arrive at a destination he had no desire to reach. Among English speaking Calvinists it would be hard to find one more logically consistent than the great American divine of the middle of the 18th century, Jonathan Edwards, a former President of what is now Princeton University.

Edwards says of himself:

"I should not take it at all amiss to be called a Calvinist, for distinction's sake: though I utterly disclaim a dependence on Calvin, or believing the doctrines which I hold, because he believed and taught them; and cannot justly be charged with believing in everything just as he taught." 1)

After reading Edwards' book entitled "An Inquiry into the Modern Prevailing Notions respecting that Freedom of Will which is supposed to be essential to Moral Agency, Virtue and Vice, Rewards and Punishment, Praise and Blame," (called for convenience "On the Will"), one wishes that there had been more such Calvinists, - men imbued with some of the independent spirit of the Genevan Reformer, and endowed with some of his critical and logical faculties, - instead of so many who have simply adhered to his doctrines because they lived in a community where they were considered orthodox, without really understanding or appreciating them; or instead of so many others, who, unable to follow the arguments of their leader, have continued to call themselves by his name, for the sake of prestige, without really believing in his major tenets; or instead of so many others, (an even larger number) who have grown up in Calvinistic churches and, incapable of appreciating the wisdom and soundness of the doctrines of their founder, are now ashamed of him and of his teaching.

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1) Jonathan Edwards, On the Will, preface, p. vi.

1. Refutation of the Arminianism doctrine of the  
Equilibrium of the Will.

Edwards devotes the most of his treatise to a definite refutation of the arguments of contemporary Arminians, and shows most conclusively that not only is there no possibility of the human will being free in any such way as they suppose, but that such a freedom is not only not necessary to moral responsibility but would entirely preclude the possibility of it. There are doubtless no philosophers to-day who hold any such doctrine of the equilibrium of the will as was held by 18th century Arminians; but there are perhaps a good many ordinary folk who do, without realizing that their view has such a highly technical name. And such folk could do no better by way of realizing the insufficiency of their position than to read this treatise of Edwards', in which he shows that volition is necessarily connected with the influence of motive, that the causal order is unbroken, even in the realm of the activity of human minds.

We are not so much concerned here with this part of Edwards' teaching. In this controversy he supports most ably the Calvinistic position; but after all, it is

only the Calvinistic position which he is supporting, and Calvin himself stood for the same conclusions, - only the exigencies of the controversies of his day did not force him to resort to the same arguments in advancing his views. Calvin, too, taught that the will is not in equilibrium but is subject to the character, that if God foreknows all things He must have foreordained them, and that the only freedom necessary to and consistent with the grounding of moral responsibility is (save in the case of Adam) freedom from constraint, and not at all any such freedom as makes the individual's choices wholly undetermined. But even in this Edwards does make an advance. The war is waged in a different field. Calvin depended almost wholly upon Scripture for the grounding of his doctrines. Edwards depends wholly upon the observations of psychological study, and is greatly influenced by Locke.<sup>1)</sup> He does not in every case agree with Locke; but he knows Locke's writings, and he is concerned to argue for the truth of Calvinistic conclusions in the light of a new philosophical outlook. And the important point is that he is able to strengthen the

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1) See pp. 14, 16, 17, 21, etc.



Calvinistic position in the light of the new philosophy, and only when he comes to the consideration of the evidence of God's foreknowledge, does he fall back on Scripture.

## 2. Advance on Calvinism - God's Will Determined.

But while there is an advance in argument, the conclusions here are the same. There is one conclusion, however, which is a marked advance. Edwards definitely maintains that not only is man's will determined by his understanding and character, and ultimately by God, but that God's will is equally as fixed and determined - by His character of ineffable goodness. Thus with Edwards the determinism is complete. Calvin made all things to depend on God's will.<sup>1)</sup> Beyond that he did not go. Edwards makes even God's will to depend on His character, and His decrees to depend on His purposes. The ultimate factor, then, is not will, but intellect. Calvin himself taught the fundamental character of God's purposes; but he did not distinguish so clearly between the 'understanding' and the 'will', and did not show definitely the latter's dependence on the former. He seemed rather to think that

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1) See also Aquinas, "Compendium", ch. 19.

God's will was free, in a different sense, of course, from that in which ours might be said to be free; whereas Edwards taught very definitely that God's will is fixed, in exactly the same sense that ours is. God's character determines His will as completely as our character determines ours. The only difference is one of situation. It is God's character alone which determines His will or choice; whereas ours is determined by our characters in view of certain limiting circumstances beyond our control.

But now as we have seen, the greatest problem confronting any Deterministic system in theology, is the problem of evil. It is with regard to this, then, that we are most interested in Edwards' development of Calvinism. Does he make any advance on the master here?

### 3. Apparent Disagreement with Augustine - Only Apparent.

Before considering this, however, it would be well to look at another matter, namely, a certain verbal disagreement with Augustine. Augustine contends that the 'cause', - the 'end' or 'motive', - of the act determines its moral quality in so far as this moral quality is an index to the moral character of the actor. Thus, as we have seen, he maintains that God may will the same act which man wills, and yet God be free from all sin while the man is guilty of sin, - simply because God and the man

have different motives for willing this act, or in other words, the causes in each case are different. But now Edwards is concerned to show that

"The essence of the virtue and vice of dispositions of the heart, and acts of the will, lies not in their cause, but their nature."

He is, however, in no disagreement with Augustine; for he is speaking not of the moral qualities of acts, as Augustine was, but of the moral quality of dispositions. With regard to the former he declares:

"I suppose the way that men came to entertain this absurd inconsistent notion, with respect to internal inclinations and volitions themselves (or notions that imply it), viz. that the essence of their moral good or evil lies not in their nature, but their cause; was, that it is indeed a very plain dictate of common sense, that it is so with respect to all outward actions, and sensible motions of the body: that the moral good or evil of them does not lie at all in the motions themselves, which taken by themselves, are nothing of a moral nature; and the essence of all the moral good or evil that concerns them, lies in those internal dispositions and volitions which are the cause of them." 1)

Which goes to show very definitely that there is perfect agreement between Augustine and Edwards on this point, and that Edwards' only reason for contending that the moral quality of dispositions is not determined by their causes is simply that they are the very things which possess

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1) Edwards, On the Will, p. 278.

moral quality in themselves, and that their moral quality is what determines that of the acts of which they are the causes.

4. The Difference with Calvin on 'Common Sense'.

There is one other minor matter to dispose of. In his argument with his calumniator, in the treatise on Providence, Calvin shows a marked distrust of 'common sense', and virtually contends that 'common sense' is not a competent judge of such profound matters;<sup>1)</sup> whereas Edwards is forever referring to it as a court of final appeal. Part of the difference here is to be accounted for by the fact that, as Professor Kemp Smith says, the philosophy of one century is the common sense of the next. The common sense to which Edwards is appealing is not that of the 16th century, but that of the 18th, enlightened by the philosophical speculations of the 17th and early 18th. Most of the rest of the difference is to be reconciled by the fact that by 'common sense' Calvin and Edwards mean different things. By 'common sense' Calvin refers more specifically to the unenlightened intelligence of the ordinary individual who knows nothing of either the true interpretation of Scripture, or the speculations of

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1) "Calvin's Calvinism", Part 2, pp. 76f.



philosophy. It has never been true that the ordinary "man in the street" could understand all the deep mysteries either of philosophy or of God. And in this Edwards would agree. The 'common sense' he refers to is the enlightened reason; and when he contends that a proposition is in accord with 'common sense' he generally merely means that it is logical, or clearly in accord with reason.

But there may be some slight degree of real difference still remaining between these two. Edwards would doubtless agree with Calvin, as against the latter's opponent, that the deepest truths of the Gospel and of Christian metaphysics are matters of revelation and definitely beyond the powers of any degree of 'common sense' to discover or fathom. But it seems that there is little question but that Edwards would push the territories in which enlightened 'common sense' was arbiter, beyond the realms which Calvin would relegate to its rule. The point is not one which I am prepared to argue at length; but one has the feeling in reading Calvin, that though he is really all the while testing his own arguments by a very enlightened reason and rejecting those of his opponents by the application of the same criterion, he is yet very much in the dark as to how far reason will go and just where it is that the mysterious begins, and he is apparently much more willing

than Edwards simply to rest on the Scriptures. Edwards, on the other hand, because he lived in a later day, pushed the domain of reason farther into the realm of what had been mystery; but he, no less than Calvin, rests his position finally upon the foundations of the Bible, and he is no more critical of its mysteries than Calvin is. Both would agree that the purposes of God are beyond human comprehension.

The real difference is that while Calvin actually applied the test of reason, which may be, as far as he is concerned, summarily stated in the form of the law of non-contradiction, he was not at all clear how far it was possible for the human mind to apply this test; whereas Edwards saw more clearly that it must be applicable everywhere, that the whole world must be rational, - that it could be understood by enlightened 'common sense' if only 'common sense' could become sufficiently enlightened. Calvin would really have been forced to the same position; but he did not see the ground here so clearly.

Both Calvin and Edwards were arguing with people who apparently accepted the teaching of Scripture: but in Calvin's day the argument was over the question of what was the teaching of Scripture; while in Edwards' time the

argument was about points not specifically settled by the teaching of Scripture. Consequently, while Calvin used reason to interpret Scripture, and apply it, he argues on the assumption that Scripture properly interpreted and applied furnishes man with a solution of all his theological difficulties. It was not until the Arminian controversy had brought out the conflicting character of what appeared to be equally possible interpretations of Scripture, that it became evident that there were issues involved which the Scripture itself did not settle, and which in turn must be settled before one could satisfactorily reduce the apparent conflicts of the Scripture itself to complete harmony. In other words, if the Bible was the Word of God, it could not teach a system of doctrine which was obviously false. And each side in the controversy began to try to make it appear that this was exactly what the other side was trying to make the Bible do.

But evidently, the criterion of truth and falsehood here was not the teaching of the Bible itself, but the requirements of reason. Actually, it seemed that one had to decide certain psychological and philosophical questions before he could interpret the Bible properly;

and the only faculty he had with which to decide these questions was his reason, or what Edwards calls his 'common sense'. Thus, from Calvin's conflict between the Scriptures and 'common sense', in which the Scriptures are accepted as having absolute authority, and 'common sense' is discredited because the Scriptures disparage it, we have advanced to Edwards' reliance upon 'common sense'<sup>1)</sup> as the guide to that truth with which the teaching of Scripture must necessarily conform, not because the authority of reason is superior to the authority of Scripture, but because both are disclosures of the same Divine truth and cannot really conflict.

### The Problem of Evil.

But now we must consider what advance Edwards makes, if any, with regard to what has shown itself to be the chief problem for Calvinism, namely, the problem of evil.

Edwards begins his discussion of this point by stating the Arminian accusation against the Calvinists.

"It is urged by Arminians," he remarks, "that the doctrine of the necessity of men's volitions, or their necessary connection with antecedent events and circumstances, makes the First Cause, and Supreme Orderer of all things, the author

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1) It must, of course, be remembered that to a certain extent Calvin and Edwards are, as has been indicated, not speaking of the same 'common sense'. Yet, in part they are; and in so far as they are, this difference between them exists.



"of sin; in that he has so constituted the state and course of things, that sinful volitions become necessary, in consequence of his disposal." 1)

Thus Edwards is confronted with exactly the same difficulty as Calvin, the difficulty of defending his system of doctrine from the accusation that it makes God the author of sin. But as Edwards points out, this difficulty is not one peculiar to Calvinism, but confronts any theological system which incorporates the doctrine of Divine foreknowledge. (As a matter of fact, it confronts any theological system in which there is the doctrine of an omnipotent Creator.)

1. God the Author of Sin - Permissively.

Edwards, however, unlike Calvin, definitely admits that God is the author of sin - in a particular sense. The trouble is that the Arminians do not define the sense in which they suppose the Calvinists make God the author of sin. And here Edwards draws what might have been a most important distinction if only he had stood by Calvin. The distinction which he should have drawn is that between 'the decreer of sin' and 'the sinner', but the one he actually does draw is that between 'the sinner' and 'the

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1) "On the Will", p. 353.

permitter of sin'. In the sense of permitting sin, God is its author. He even admits that God is 'the orderer of sin'; but it is in the sense of permitting it or disposing of it.

a. The mistake of resorting to the already discredited distinction regarding Permission.

It would seem that Edwards here makes an advance over the position of Calvin, in that he admits God to be the author of sin in some sense. But in trying to explain in what sense, he relinquishes some of the ground which Calvin had already won. For Calvin had very rightly pointed out that there can be no real difference between God's so-called permissive decrees and His active decrees. Since God is ultimately the Creator of all things, if He permits anything, He actively wills it to be, - just as actively as He wills anything to be. If by 'permission' Edwards simply means the distinction between the one who wills an act and the immediate actor, the distinction meant is the legitimate one; but 'permission' is not the proper word for its designation. As a matter of fact, Edwards does mean this in part; but he does not see the issue clearly, and in his confusion he apparently thinks that this distinction is one with that between 'permission' and

'action'; and he actually treats this latter as the real distinction, - which, as we have seen, Calvin had shown to be a mere delusion as far as God's part in the affairs of the world is concerned. Edwards declares:

"There is a great difference between God's being concerned thus, by his permission, in an event and act, which, in the inherent subject and agent of it, is sin, (though the event will certainly follow on his permission), and his being concerned in it by producing it and exerting the act of sin; or between his being the orderer of its certain existence, by not hindering it, under certain circumstances, and his being the proper actor or author of it, by a positive agency or efficiency. And this, notwithstanding what Dr. Whitby offers about a saying of philosophers, that causa deficiens, in rebus necessariis ad causam per se efficientem reducenda est. As there is a vast difference between the sun's being the cause of the light-someness and warmth of the atmosphere, and brightness of gold and diamonds, by its presence and positive influence; and its being the occasion of darkness and frost in the night, by its motion, whereby it descends below the horizon. The motion of the sun is the occasion of the latter kind of events; but it is not the proper cause, efficient, or producer of them; though they are necessarily consequent on that motion under such circumstances: no more is any action of the Divine, Being the cause of the evil of men's wills." 1)

But now as Calvin was so careful to point out, if a sinful act happens, it happens not because God has permitted it to happen, but because He has decreed that it should happen. In other words, God is the ultimate producer of

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1) Op. Cit., p. 363. (The construction of Edwards' sentences is not always above reproach.)

every act. According to Edwards' own argument with regard to the necessity of our volitions and the universality of the causal order, God as Creator is the First Cause of all things; and though he may draw a distinction between remote cause and immediate cause, as he does (and as Calvin had also done), yet the one is no more cause than the other, there is no break in the causal connection, and it is not God's 'permission' but His 'action' which is the First Cause - if one is to draw any real distinction between permission and action. To speak of God's permitting things in the way Edwards does is to speak as if there were other forces at work in the world which were not started by Him. But Edwards would not admit that this is the case. Consequently, there is no difference at all between God's being concerned in the act of sin by His permission and His "being concerned in it by producing it". The real distinction, as we shall see, comes between His producing it as the act of a creature and His doing it Himself as His own sinful act. God is not "the orderer of its certain existence" merely "by not hindering it under certain circumstances"; He is the "author of it by a positive agency or efficiency." Yet He is not its "proper actor" any more than it is God who dies when He



actively decrees, wills, and brings about by His eternal and inevitable agency, the death of one of His creatures. The real point of distinction is that the sinfulness of the act attaches itself solely to the creature's participation in it; it is the creature's sin and not God's, as Calvin and Edwards are forever telling us, - yet without ever telling us why this is or how it can be.

Moreover, all such similes as that of the sun's being the cause of the warmth of the atmosphere but not the cause of darkness, are of no use whatever for the argument. No one ever contended that the sun was the cause of darkness, - at least no one who understood the situation as Edwards does, - simply because no such person ever contended that the sun was the First Cause of all things. This is the grand point of difference, which is the very point pertinent to the argument. What Edwards has said about the difference between God's permission of sin and His producing it, is not true 'notwithstanding what Dr. Whitby says about a deficient cause, in necessary things, being reducible to an efficient'; because it is not true at all. Dr. Whitby is correct in maintaining<sup>1)</sup> that if God does not come to the assistance of sinful men it

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1) Op. cit., pp. 353f.

must be because He wills their sin; and Edwards' bringing up the necessity of the sin of devils, which Dr. Whitby will not deny, does not alter the case. The reason Dr. Whitby's remark does not apply, is not that it is not true, but rather that God is never merely a deficient cause, but always, as Calvin pointed out, an efficient one, - efficient not in this derived sense of refraining from a certain activity, but in the direct sense of positively willing what is. Edwards' case of the devils shows that Dr. Whitby gets nowhere in this attempt to prove that Calvinism differs from Arminianism in making God the author of sin; but at the same time it does not throw any very clear light upon how Calvinism is to explain the fact that God can be the author of sin and yet not be a sinner. This is the real problem for Calvinism; and it is not enough merely to show that Arminians are logically forced by their doctrines also to conclude that God is the author of sin.

b. Results in the equally fatal distinction between Natural and Supernatural.

In attempting to solve this problem, Edwards, largely because of his falling back on the already discredited

distinction with regard to permission, makes the mistake of resorting to what really amounts to the equally fatal distinction between the natural and the supernatural<sup>1</sup>. The two distinctions are of a piece; but neither has any place in a Theistic Determinism. Calvin, too, might be said to have distinguished between the natural and the supernatural, especially in his treatment of grace;<sup>1)</sup> but the distinction he makes is not such a far-reaching one as that which Edwards falls into as a result of following the idea of permission, which Calvin had rejected. The distinction implicit in Edwards is of such a far-reaching order that it lands him in what looks very much like a definite Dualism or Pluralism. For he says:

"So, inasmuch as sin is not the fruit of any positive agency or influence of the Most High, but, on the contrary, arises from the withholding of his action and energy, and, under certain circumstances, necessarily follows on the want of his influence; this is no argument that he is sinful, or his operation evil, or has anything of the nature of evil; but on the contrary, that he, and his agency, are altogether good and holy, and that he is the fountain of all holiness. It would be strange arguing, indeed, because men never commit sin, but only when God leaves them to themselves, and necessarily sin when he does so, that therefore their sin is not from themselves, but from God; and so that God must be a sinful

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1) See "Calvin's Calvinism", Part 2, p. 27; also ch. 8 above.

"being; as strange as it would be to argue, because it is always dark when the sun is gone, and never dark when the sun is present, that therefore all darkness is from the sun, and that his disc and beams must needs be black." 1)

Now several things may be said about this. In the first place, it has not been shown that "sin is not the fruit of any positive agency or influence of the Most High, but, on the contrary, arises from the withholding of his action and energy"; and while this latter clause may express what the Arminians think the Calvinists are forced to admit, it is not necessarily the limit of what the Calvinists should contend. And in the second place, this whole idea that men sin when God leaves them to themselves, and only when He leaves them to themselves, while it may, as Edwards maintains, give no ground at all for calling God a sinful being, is yet in itself an unproved assumption, and one which rests upon the distinction between the natural and the supernatural, a distinction which in this context amounts to saying either that there is an independent force of evil in the world which lays hold upon men when they are deserted by God, or else that men are in themselves independent of God and are evil, though inferior in strength to God. All of which is to say, not only that

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1) Op. cit., p. 364.



nature is evil, but that evil is natural. But the impossibility of such an explanation is immediately made apparent when we ask, Whence came nature? and How does it happen in a world made by God that evil, which on the very assumption being considered is contrary to His nature, is natural? And again this analogy of the sun is worse than useless, because the point we are concerned about is not whether men sin when God deserts them, but granting that they do, why does God desert them, and how does it happen when He does desert them that they necessarily sin. If the sun had anything to say about whether it would stay and shine, or sink below the horizon and be followed by darkness, then it would just to that extent be responsible for the darkness which followed on its departure. The fact that it has not any such voice in the matter is the very thing which prevents it from being in any sense the cause of the darkness; but it is just the point, also, which destroys all the force of the analogy. Edwards is right in contending that even if one should argue that darkness was from the sun in this sense that the sun was responsible for it by deliberately departing that it might appear, no sensible person would therefore

contend that "his disc and beams must needs be black", - for the simple reason that darkness did not characterize their appearance but their absence. And so it is with God. We can believe that God is good and that His influence is good; and even if we say that evil follows upon the removal of His influence, as Edwards and the Arminians seem to be agreed that it does; yet there is no reason here to conclude that God must be evil and that His influence is such. The very thing noticed is the difference between good and evil, and if it be discovered that the former follows from the presence of God, and the latter from His absence, surely this discovery furnishes no legitimate reason for a conclusion which would amount to its contradiction. But it is hard to believe that this is really what the Arminians were concerned about - or at any rate it is not what they should have been concerned about; for even if one should suppose that it rested with the sun to decide whether it would stay and shine or depart and be followed by darkness, there still remains this even greater distinction between the sun and God, namely that there is nothing other than God save what He has Himself created. The thing Edwards should have seen, and apparently did not, was simply that if one granted all this supposed Arminian argument to be

foolishness, there still remained the great problem of how there appeared this difference between good and evil in a world created by what we are all willing to believe is a good God,<sup>1)</sup> and also how it happens

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 1) There does appear to be a marked difference between the possibility of the appearance of evil in a good universe and the possibility of the appearance of good in an evil universe. If God is the omnipotent Creator of the universe and is Himself evil, the universe is evil. But this only means that it is morally evil from our standpoint; it cannot possibly be actually evil from God's standpoint, for if it were so, there would be no reason for His having created it. In a rational universe, not even an evil God does things which to Him are evil. (See Aquinas, "Compendium", ch. 19) And if the universe is not rational, there can be no moral distinctions, and we can say nothing about this or any other matter. And if in a rational universe we consider both God and the universe evil, then it simply means that our moral standard is different from God's standard of actual good and evil; and we are not justified in concluding that God's moral standard is the same as ours, and that what is actually good and desirable to Him is in His view morally evil, because the very fact that our conception of moral goodness was out of accord with what to God was actually good, might lead us to suppose that our conception was mistaken. Our conception of moral goodness is closely wrapped up with what we judge to be actually good for us in the universe. What reason have we, therefore, for concluding that God's moral standard is in conformity with ours, and not in conformity with His own view of what to Him is desirable? The very possibility of such a supposition presupposes a moral standard altogether apart from God. But if this is so, whence came this moral standard? - a moral standard in which goodness corresponds not to what is, but to what is not? If we divorce the moral from the actual in any such way as this, then we are left with the difficulty of accounting for how we happen to have such a moral standard. Either we must conclude that our moral standard is a mistaken one, - in which case God and the universe are really morally good; or we must conclude that it was good from God's standpoint that we have the true standard of morality,

that God can actually leave men to themselves. This raises the whole question of God's activity in the world, which in turn involves the question of the nature of creation.

Edwards touches upon neither of these last two points, but he does go on to deal with a problem closely related to the first. He does not raise the question how the difference between good and evil appears in a world created by a good God; he simply takes the actual existence of both good and evil for granted, and proceeds to argue that it is fitting that God should order and govern both. He asks:

"Is it not better that the good and evil which happens in God's world, should be ordered, regulated, bounded, and determined, by the good pleasure of an infinitely wise Being, --- than to leave these things to fall out by chance, and to be determined by those causes which have no understanding or aim?" 1)

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but that for us to have the true standard is a moral evil. But now, according to our own standard it cannot be morally evil for us to know what is really morally good and morally evil. Therefore, in this respect, at least, we must conclude that God's action is morally good, and that in this particular His conception of the desirable corresponds with the morally good. God cannot, then, be wholly; and an absolutely evil universe becomes an impossibility.

1) Op. cit., p. 365.



## EVIL.

But now the question is not, whether it is not better if we are to have good and evil, to have the matter under the control of God. The question is, if the matter is entirely under the control of God, how there can be any evil at all. Edwards' remarks on this point suggest very strongly that the whole position is a compromise, a choice between two evils, of which the better is evil under control. But the enigma is, how evil ever gets into the universe to start with; and the question which still remains is: Can there be any real evil in a good universe?

2. God Does No Evil.

Edwards very rightly maintains that God does no evil in allowing sin; but the thing he does not see is that this is really to contend that sin is not evil. He declares:

"On the whole it is manifest, that God may be, in the manner which has been described, the orderer and disposer of that event, which, in the inherent subject and agent is moral evil; and yet his so doing may be no moral evil. --- Sin may be an evil thing; and yet that there should be such a disposal and permission as that it should come to pass, may be a good thing." 1)

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1) Op. cit., p. 366. See Aquinas, "Compendium", ch. 19.

And then Edwards strikes the point which Calvin had already brought out and which if followed through might possibly be the solution of the difficulty. He says,

"Joseph's brethren selling him into Egypt, consider it only as it was acted by them, and with respect to their views and aims, which were evil, was a very bad thing; but it was a good thing, as it was an event of God's ordering, and considered with respect to his views and aims, which were good." 1)

But this is to say, not merely that it is not wrong for God to permit sin or moral evil - which is a most highly doubtful assertion, though it is the assertion Edwards is guilty of making, - this is to say that the event which from one point of view is evil, is from a more adequate point of view, namely that of God, not evil at all but good. And Edwards specifically says as much when he says

"Joseph's brethren selling him into Egypt ---- was a good thing ---- considered with respect to God's views and aims."

The thing Edwards is forever failing to see is that the same thing cannot be both good and evil at the same time and from the same point of view; and that consequently if any event is good from God's point of view, it cannot also be evil from His point of view, and that to contend

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1) *Op. cit.*, pp. 366, 367.

## EVIL.

that evil is good to God is to contend that God is evil.

a. Distinction between God's Secret and Revealed Wills.

While there may be a real distinction between God's secret and revealed will, Edwards' treatment of the subject is too obscure to be of much value to the Calvinist argument. He remarks:

"God's secret and revealed will, or, in other words, his disposing and perceptive will, may be diverse, and exercised in dissimilar acts, the one in disapproving and opposing, the other in willing and determining, without inconsistency. ~~Because~~, although these dissimilar exercises of the Divine will may, in some respects, relate to the same things, yet, in strictness, they have different objects, the one evil, and the other good. Thus, for instance, the crucifixion of Christ was a thing contrary to the revealed or perceptive will of God; because, as it was viewed and done by his malignant murderers, it was a thing infinitely contrary to the holy inclination of his heart, revealed in his law. Yet this does not at all hinder but that the crucifixion of Christ, considered with all those glorious consequences which were within the view of the Divine Omniscience, might be, indeed, and therefore might appear to God to be, a glorious event; and consequently be agreeable to his will, though this will may be secret, i.e. not revealed in God's law. And thus considered, the crucifixion of Christ was not evil, but good." 1)

Now here Edwards seems to be contending that God's

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1) Op. cit., pp. 367f. One is not certain whether per-  
ceptive or preceptive is meant in this.

## SECRET AND REVEALED WILLS.

revealed will is His will of opposition to evil, and His secret will, His will of determination of good. And he maintains that this position is not inconsistent, because these two acts of willing relate really to different objects, And then he cites, not two objects, but one: the Crucifixion, - taking it in what he conceives to be two different aspects. But they are not two different aspects from the same point of view; but rather, two different points of view. Now it is undeniable that there are connected with the Crucifixion certain features which appear to us as definitely evil and necessarily opposed to the will of God. But if we maintain this, as Edwards does, how are we, on the supposition of Divine Omnipotence, to account for their existence? The Crucifixion itself, as an historical event, involves all these features; they actually characterize it. Nay, it is impossible to conceive how the Crucifixion could ever have occurred without these or some other apparently evil features. And in a world governed by a Divine Omnipotent Providence, if this event occurred, it must have occurred just as it did, because it and all its attending circumstances were willed by God.<sup>1)</sup> Edwards supposes that when he points out the

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 1) As Aquinas says, "Since, therefore, the Will of God is the universal cause of all things, it must necessarily be always fulfilled." ("Compendium", ch. 19, p. 55). But if it is the cause of all things and is always fulfilled, nothing can happen but as a result of it.



gloriousness of the Crucifixion from the standpoint of its consequences in the Divine economy he is obviously justifying God's secretly willing it, without in any way involving God's secret will in conflict with what he has just contended was His revealed will in the matter. But he has actually succeeded in doing nothing but put them in the most direct opposition. God's revealed will, being a will of opposition to evil, has rejected the very events which God's secret will has decreed shall occur. Apparently Edwards is supposing that God's secret will wills only those characteristics of the Crucifixion which he calls good. But obviously it wills also those characteristics which he calls evil and contends are opposed by God's revealed will; because these latter are just as much a part of the Crucifixion, as it actually occurred in world history, as the former. Edwards supposes that he has reconciled the two aspects of God's will by ascribing to God

"different and opposite exercises of heart respecting different objects, and objects contrary to one another;"

but he has done nothing of the sort. He has given us one object, the Crucifixion, and called it both good and evil,

and argued accordingly that it was decreed by God's secret will and opposed by His revealed will. Which is as consistent as saying that God willed it and did not will it at the same time; or rather that God both willed it and opposed it; or that it was both pleasing to God and displeasing to Him.

To characterize God's revealed will as a will of the rejection of evil in such a way as Edwards does, is wholly erroneous. The real distinction between God's secret will and His revealed will, which Edwards seems never able to discover, is simply that when we use these two terms we are using 'will' in two definitely different meanings. God's secret will is His active choice of what exists in the world. His revealed will is merely<sup>a</sup>/name given to a moral code which presumably expresses such an ideal for human conduct as if followed would make it conform, not to God's actual will, which is His secret will, but to the same degree of moral perfection as characterizes God. The simple fact of the matter is that God does not will all men to be like Himself with respect to the righteousness of their motives. Yet this is not to say, as Edwards appears to say, that God in so doing wills the existence of evil, - nor is it to say that He

does evil, - since we have just supposed His motives to be righteous.

Furthermore it is extremely difficult to see why Edwards should speak of God's revealed will as expressing itself only in "disapproving and opposing". It surely indicates what a man should do, as well as what he should not do, and indicates the Divine approval as well as disapproval.

Whatever the relation between God's secret and revealed will, Edwards does not seem yet to have discovered it, and his references to it, instead of clearing up difficulties, only make his development of the Calvinistic position more confused. In strict accord with a thoroughly consistent Calvinism there seems to be only one thing to be said about God's revealed will: it is the expression of an ideal for human conduct. God does not will that every man shall reach it; He wills that some shall strive to reach it; and that a great many, at least, shall have some conception of what the ideal is. This view presents tremendous difficulties; but it avoids the inconsistency of saying that God's revealed will refers to one thing and His secret to another, and then pointing to an illustration, which shows that they refer to the same.

One may suspect that what Edwards was trying to say was that the same act may appear evil from our standpoint and not so from God's, merely because we have only a partial view of it. And it is the vague awareness of this truth that Edwards expresses in the following:

"There is no inconsistency in supposing, that God may hate a thing as it is in itself, and considered simply as evil, and yet that it may be his will it should come to pass, considering all consequences." 1)

Now it is perfectly true that God may hate a thing 'considered simply as evil' and yet may will that it should come to pass because He sees that its consequences are good. But if the consequences of the thing are good and such as God desired, there would seem to be some mistake about considering it simply as evil; and one may very rightly question whether or not it is possible to know what a thing is in itself apart from its universal relations and consequences. And if its consequences are good and God chooses that the thing shall exist, how can He hate it?

Edwards is certainly close to the truth here. As we shall see later, God would hate certain things if they existed alone, or if their relations and consequences were different, which He very justly wills to be exactly as they

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1) Op. cit., pp. 368f.



are. This is almost what Edwards says, but not quite. There is this significant difference: Edwards says the thing is in itself evil and hateful to God, yet He wills it - because of its good consequences (which is simply saying, not that God does evil, but that He wills evil, that good may come); while what would seem to be the correct statement from the Calvinistic point of view is that that which God wills often appears to us as evil, and would doubtless be so, if it were taken out of its universal context.

Edwards goes on to remark:

"I believe there is no person of good understanding, who will venture to say, he is certain that it is impossible it should be best, taking in the whole compass and extent of existence, and all consequences in the endless series of events, that there should be such a thing as moral evil in the world. And if so, it will certainly follow, that an infinitely wise Being who always chooses what is best, must choose that there should be such a thing. And if so, then such a choice is not evil, but a wise and holy choice." 1)

### 3. Does Edwards Leave Any Place for Evil?

Now one will not question for a moment that if things are as Edwards here declares them to be, the choice is a wise and holy one. But what also seems to follow is that if the choice is wise and holy, the thing chosen must itself be good, and that if it be good for the world that moral

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1) Op. cit., pp. 369f.

evil exist, then what we call moral evil is not really moral evil at all, but good. But that Edwards did not see this, is clear from his further remark that

God's "willing to order things so that evil should come to pass, for the sake of the contrary good, is no argument that he does not hate evil as evil: and if so, then it is no reason why he may not reasonably forbid evil as evil, and punish it as such." 1)

In the first place, it seems most strange that evil should result in its contrary, and questionable, to say the least. In the second place, if God really does forbid evil as evil, then evil as evil does not exist to be punished. Edwards is evidently thinking here, not of God the Creator but of God the Righteous Judge. But are these conceptions the same? Evidently they are not; for what applies to the one does not apply to the other.

A better statement of the actual situation is found in the following assertions of Turnbull in his Christian Philosophy, quoted from Edwards:

"If the Author and Governor of all things be infinitely perfect, then whatever is, is right; of all possible systems he hath chosen the best; and consequently there is no absolute evil in the universe. This being the case, all the seeming imperfections or evils in it are such only in a partial view; and, with respect to the whole system, they are goods."

"There is no evil in the universe."

God "intends and pursues the universal good of his creation: and the evil which happens, is not permitted for its own sake, or through

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1) Op. cit., p. 370

"any pleasure in evil, but because it is requisite to the greater good pursued." 1)

This agrees with what Calvin acknowledges to have been truly said by Augustine:

"In sin, or in evil, there is nothing positive." 2)  
no

And it is <sup>no</sup> more than is logically deducible from what Edwards goes on to observe concerning the perfect happiness of God and the nature of moral evil. It would seem that the Calvinist in any case is forced to agree with Leibniz that this is the best of all possible worlds.

Edwards lays down the following as "maxims of plain truth, and indisputable evidence":

- "1. That God is a perfectly happy being, in the most absolute and highest sense possible.
2. That it will follow from hence, that God is free from everything that is contrary to happiness; and so, that in strict propriety of speech, there is no such thing as any pain, grief, or trouble in God.
3. When any intelligent being is really crossed and disappointed, and things are contrary to what he truly desires, he is the less pleased, or has less pleasure, his pleasure and happiness is diminished, and he suffers what is disagreeable to him, or is the subject of something that is of a

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1) Turnbull, "Christian Philosophy", pp. 35, 37, and 40 respectively; quoted from Edwards, "On the Will", pp. 369f, footnote.

In the last chapter of the present thesis, a view similar to that of Turnbull is expressed, though neither Edwards nor Turnbull were read until after this chapter was written, the present chapter having been inserted after the completion of the first draft of the thesis.

2) Calvin, "Defence of the Secret Providence of God", p. 13. ("Calvin's Calvinism", Part II.)

"nature contrary to joy and happiness, even pain and grief." 1)

And in a footnote he adds,

"Certainly it is not less absurd and unreasonable to talk of God's will and desires being truly and properly crossed, without his suffering any uneasiness, or anything grievous or disagreeable, than it is to talk of something that may be called a revealed will, which may, in some respect, be different from a secret purpose; which purpose may be fulfilled, when the other is opposed." 2)

But this strikes one as being exactly what Edwards has done. There is nothing left in the Crucifixion, e.g., for the 'revealed will' to oppose, which the 'secret purpose' has not decreed. The 'revealed will' cannot really oppose the sin and evil which, according to Edwards, characterized the Crucifixion, because so far as he makes evident these were no less real and actual phases of it than its eternal consequences; they actually happened, and if they did happen, they were decreed by God's 'secret will'. It not only follows from what Edwards says about God's perfect happiness, that God is free from everything contrary to happiness, it also follows either that evil does not exist, or that God does not hate it; and that either sin does not exist, or is not evil. Edwards sees that his three axioms involve somebody in a dilemma; but

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- 1) Edwards, "On the Will", p. 371.
  - 2) Ibid., footnote, the same page.



strangely enough he appears to imagine that it is his opponent! For he remarks,

"From this last axiom it follows, that if no distinction is to be admitted between God's hatred of sin, and his will with respect to the event and the existence of sin, as the all-wise Determiner of all events, under the view of all consequences through the whole compass and series of things; --- then, it certainly follows, that the coming to pass of every individual act of sin is truly, all things considered, contrary to his will, and that his will is really crossed in it; and this in proportion as he hates it. --- Which would be to make him infinitely the most miserable of all beings;" since if some distinction is not made, "he must continually be the subject of an immense number of real and truly infinitely great crosses and vexations."<sup>1)</sup>

But if Edwards sees so clearly the need for making a distinction "between God's hatred of sin, and his will with respect to the event and the existence of sin", why does he not make one? He admits that God wills the existence of sin, and yet he goes on speaking of His hatred of it, as if His hatred of it and His choice of it were equally true and existed on the same level of reality. Edwards firmly maintains that a distinction must be made. But what distinction? What the reader craves to know is, how God can both hate and desire sin at the same time. And this is exactly what Edwards never makes clear. It does not suffice merely to say, as Edwards does, that God

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1) Op.cit.,p.372.

does not desire sin as sin, without going on and saying what inevitably follows from this on Edwards' view, namely, that sin as sin does not exist, and that therefore God does not hate the sin which exists, because it is not really sin. But this is exactly what Edwards does not go on to say.

a. Not a case of "Evil that good may come."

He is perfectly right in maintaining that this is not the same as saying that God may do evil that good may come; because even if evil is real, and God wills its existence, He does no evil, if He wills it for a good end. There is still a distinction between God's doing this and a man's committing what he recognizes to be a sinful act in order that what he conceives to be a good may result from it. And this distinction is simply that God being the sole Creator and Governor of the universe has the right to order all things for the ultimate good, and if the existence of evil is good - which is part of the argument - then to will its existence is not an evil but a good; whereas man has not the right actually to do evil that good may result from it, which is an entirely different thing. Of course, if we deny that the man in so doing actually does do evil, then we are simply destroying the whole force of the argument, and the consequence is that we arrive at the conclusion

that it is impossible for anyone to do evil that good may come of it, because the motive wholly determines the character of the act and so to act is not to do evil. But it is questionable if there does not still remain a difference between God and man with regard to this matter on the score of wisdom and consequent assurance. It may be doubted whether a man is a competent judge in such a case, and whether or not he is morally warranted in deciding that the actual good outweighs the actual evil resulting from his decision to act in this way. Considering his ignorance and the tremendous possibility of his being mistaken, he may be guilty in so acting of, at least, the sin of presumption. But such cannot be said of God on this supposition. If He wills the existence of actual evil, He does so with definite assurance that it is unquestionably best. If man so acted, he would not sin either. His sin comes from the impossibility of his being a competent judge in such matters.

But the question still remains whether or not God does will the existence of actual moral evil that good may come of it. If He does do so, His doing it is not evil. But, is it logically possible for Him to do so? According to Edwards,

"In order to a thing's being morally evil, there must be one of these things belonging to it: either it must be a thing unfit and unsuitable in its own nature: or it must have a bad tendency; or it must proceed from an evil disposition, and be done for an evil end."1)

But while Edwards' contention that God's conduct is on no account reprehensible, because it is not in itself unsuitable that He should govern the world and do exactly as He does, nor does His conduct have a bad tendency, nor does it proceed from an evil disposition, is perfectly sound; yet, all this being true, wherein can the things which happen in the world according to God's good plan, themselves be considered evil? Edwards quite rightly remarks,

"It is no evil desire to desire good, and to desire that which, all things considered, is best."2)

But if it is good which is desired, and that which is really best, wherein is the thing itself, the event, the actual historical happening, evil?

Edwards continues:

"2. It is not of a bad tendency, for the Supreme Being thus to order and permit that moral evil to be, which it is best should come to pass."3)

All Edwards is saying is that it is good that evil should exist. He applies the term 'evil' to the nature

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 1) Op.cit.,pp.372f.  
 2) Op.cit.,p.373.  
 3) Ibid.,p.374.



of the thing, and 'good' to its existence. But since it exists only through the choice of God, the thing itself must be good from His standpoint, or He would not choose it. The particular thing cannot itself be evil and its existence good from the same standpoint, without making 'evil' equivalent to 'good'. The 'evil', then, must refer to the nature of the thing simply from our standpoint; and the thing appears evil to us because we do not see it in its relation to the whole.<sup>1)</sup> As far as God is concerned, to use Edwards' own words,

"what is aimed at is good, and good is the actual issue in the final result of things."<sup>2)</sup>

And the conclusion to be drawn from this is that from God's standpoint evil does not exist. There is evil; but it does not exist.

#### The Entrance of Sin into the World.

With regard to the problem of the entrance of sin into the world, it is difficult to say just what Edwards' position is. He appears to admit that God so ordered the circumstances of man's life that "his sin would infallibly follow" from the withholding of Divine assistance, but he denies that God "first made man with a fixed prevailing principle of sin in his heart."

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1) One comes here, through following Calvinism to its logical limits, to what appears to be the Hegelian 'concrete universal', and that without consciously following any Hegelian arguments.

2) Op.cit., p. 375.

## SIN.

He declares,

"It was meet, if sin did come into existence, and appear in the world, it should arise from the imperfection which properly belongs to a creature, as such, and should appear so to do, that it might appear not to be from God as the efficient or fountain. But this could not have been, if man had been made at first with sin in his heart; nor unless the abiding principle and habit of sin were first introduced by an evil act of the creature. If sin had not arose (?) from the imperfection of the creature, it would not have been so visible, that it did not arise from God, as the positive cause, and real source of it." 1)

But this is to say practically nothing as to what sin is and how it came into the world. Edwards, like Calvin, offers no real explanation, and he does not even avoid the unmeaning attempts at explanation which he ridicules the Arminians for making.

In the first place, is 'the imperfection which properly belongs to a creature' moral imperfection? If so, then it is evident that the Creator is the positive cause of sin, and that man is made 'with a fixed prevailing principle of sin in his heart'. And if not, then this imperfection is no explanation of how sin comes to be.

In the second place, to contend that "the abiding principle and habit of sin were first introduced by an evil act

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1) Op. cit., pp. 375f.

of the creature" (in which Edwards again agrees with Calvin), is to offer no explanation at all for the first sinful act. What we want to know is, how man came to sin in the first place; and Edwards, full of wisdom, tells us that the habit of sinning resulted from the first sin. But this is to say nothing at all about the reason for the first sin. As a matter of fact Edwards runs away from the problem by pretending that it would require too much space to go into all the difficulties which arise in connection with it. Later he ridicules the Arminians roundly for supposing that it is an explanation of the difficulty to say, either that "the first sinful act of choice was before the first sinful act of choice, and chose and determined it, and brought it to pass", or that "the first sinful volition chose, determined, and produced itself; which is to say, it was before it was", or that "the first sinful volition arose accidentally, without any cause at all". But do not he and Calvin put themselves in the same position with regard to this matter as the Arminians? The only alternative is to say boldly that God being the First Cause of all things, is the First Cause of sin, "the positive cause, and real source of it," in so far as we are concerned with its existence. But Edwards does not say this, because

he evidently thinks that to say so, is to call God a sinner. So he speaks of the creature as introducing something. But how can the creature introduce anything in such a way as to relieve God of the final responsibility of being its ultimate originator? The whole force of Edwards' book is to show that the causal chain cannot be broken. If Edwards means to imply that sin first entered into the world as a result of an evil act of the creature, he is only admitting that the creature was already sinful before the first evil act. And then the question is, how did he become sinful. Certainly not as a result of his own sinful acts, for he had not yet committed any. Thus Edwards is as bad off as his opponents, and he can only say, either that "the first sinful act of choice was before the first sinful act of choice", or that it chose itself, or else that it arose from pure chance and was caused by nothing. He supposed that he had another alternative; but if he had really pushed his explanation farther, instead of running away from it, he would have seen that he was involved in exactly the same cul-de-sac as the Arminians, and which he had all along been pointing out to them was a cul-de-sac.

The thing Edwards failed to see, or saw only vaguely, 1)

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1) This may be the explanation Edwards really was feeling for; but he certainly never makes it clear, and he very evidently turns off into another way.



was that to admit that God was the First Cause of sin in the same positive fashion that He was the First Cause of everything else which existed, was not to make God a sinner. God is undeniably the First Cause of the fact of my riding a bicycle, He is the positive cause of it, and the one ultimately responsible for it; yet this is not to say that it is not I but God who rides the bicycle. The distinction is not that of degree of positiveness; but simply that between Determiner and actor. Edwards like Calvin seems to think that by putting a time interval between the creation of man and the first appearance of sin, he relieves God of the responsibility of sin; but this is a mere delusion, - and a most senseless one in view of the fact that he has almost arrived at the conclusion that even if evil exists, its existence is good. All he needed to say, therefore, was that the existence of sin was good, and therefore God was not a sinner in causing it to exist. But just as he failed to see that what we call 'evil' must not be such in reality to God, because He chooses that it shall be; so he fails to see the only way open to him to avoid calling God a sinner.

He really makes no advance on Calvin with regard to the explanation of the entrance of sin into the world. Both alike desert their guns and hide behind a hedge row in a side

lane on this controversy.

But, for all their shortcomings in attacking this problem, we are much indebted to Calvin and Edwards for carrying their Theistic Determinism as far as they did, and it can scarcely be considered a mark of wisdom to join the group of those who ignorantly ridicule the major tenets of their system of theology. We may upbraid them for not going farther; but this in itself is commendation of the great high-road on which they were travelling. It is interesting to note again in closing, the already quoted remark of Professor James Ward, together with a portion of its elaboration:

"If we start from theism --- then indeed the necessitarian position appears to be axiomatic. It is I think, generally allowed that in the long theological controversies, which for centuries have raged round our problem, logic has been on the side of those who, like Augustine, Aquinas, Calvin and Edwards, have maintained the doctrine of divine predestination, the doctrine 'that God orders all events, and the volitions of moral agents amongst others, by such a decisive disposal, that the events are infallibly connected with his disposal'. --- The absolute omniscience and omnipotence of God are regarded as beyond question; and from these follow as a corollary the absolute and eternal decrees. As Jonathan Edwards concisely put it: 'All things are perfectly and equally in his view from eternity; hence it will follow that his designs or purposes are not things formed anew, founded on any new views or appearances, but are all eternal purposes.'" 1)

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1) James Ward, "Realm of Ends", p. 308. The quotations are both from what Prof. Ward calls "Jonathan Edwards's classical treatise".

**A THEISTIC MONISM.**

Having seen that Calvin and Edwards developed a system of theology which while tending towards a complete Determinism yet drew back before the Problem of Evil; we have now to consider whether or not there can be a thorough-going Determinism which is both Theistic and Christian; for if what purports to be a system of Christian Theology, is really neither Theistic nor Christian, it must definitely be rejected. As a philosophy it may be highly satisfactory; but as a Christian Theology it is of no value.

As we have also seen, the deterministic features of Calvinism<sup>are</sup> consistent with the teaching of the Scriptures, - and what is particularly important, the Scriptural teaching of our Lord Himself. If it is not possible to develop this teaching into a consistent theological system, it would seem that Christianity itself is illogical, and must either be changed or discounted accordingly. However, I think it is possible to develop Calvin's major trend into a thoroughly consistent system which will be at the same time Theistic and Christian: that is, the different elements in the Christian teaching can be woven together into a consistent system of theology, and this theology will be deterministic.

But now, let us have no false ideas about the far reaching effects of the acceptance of any form of Determinism. A deterministic theology will lead us into fields which have been generally considered beyond the province of orthodox Christianity. They may not really have been so; they may have been underneath our Christian conceptions all the while, but they have not generally been considered so.

Determinism leads ultimately to Monism.

In the first place, Determinism, it seems to me, leads ultimately to Monism. There is no place in a thorough-going Determinism for real and ultimate individuality. And frankly, Theism has generally been considered as a particular form of Pluralism. Orthodox Christianity has always considered that while God made us, we were other than He, and He was other than we. Between us there was interaction through providence and prayer. God acted upon us, He influenced us, He ruled and governed us; and we in turn were obligated to surrender ourselves to Him. With all its expressions regarding God being all in all, the language of the Bible and of all Christian theology has been almost invariably pluralistic. And the language of Calvin is pluralistic. He is talking to us as if we were individuals, and he is speaking of God's dealings with us as though we were separate from God; in spite of the fact that his



conceptions are almost wholly deterministic. To speak so is only natural; and we shall never be able to avoid it. Nor is it desirable that we should. We still speak of the sun rising and setting, merely because to our eyes it does rise and set. We know as a matter of fact that with regard to this matter it is the earth that moves and not the sun, but that does not enable us to see the earth moving about the sun; it still looks to us as if the sun were moving about the earth. Our increase of knowledge on this point has not made things appear any differently. We are simply aware of the fact that "Things are not always what they seem." But, knowing that they are not, we shall still continue to speak of them in many cases as if they were, simply because in these cases we are speaking of them not as we know them to be but as they still appear to be. And we do appear to ourselves and to one another to be separate and distinct individuals, however much we may believe ourselves to have no existence apart from God. We cannot see God with the physical eye, so that when we are living in a physical world as physical beings, talking to other people who are physical beings other than ourselves, we cannot avoid considering ourselves as individuals and speaking and living accordingly. But this does not mean at all that we may not at the

same time believe that the physical world is not the ultimately real world.

The fact that we cannot live and act on a thoroughly deterministic and monistic basis does not at all disprove the truth of Determinism and Monism; it merely shows that bare Determinism and bare Monism are not the whole of the truth. But we shall have more to say of this later. We have not yet shown how Determinism leads ultimately to Monism.

Let us accept, for the sake of argument, the Calvinistic doctrines of Creation and Providence and <sup>their</sup> logical corollary, Predestination. We say, then, that every thing is created by God and every event happens according to His will. We hold that everything happens according to a strict law of causation, and therefore God as their Creator must be the First Cause of all things. But we say that all things are as they are because God decreed or willed them to be so, and this indicates that we are really speaking of God not only as a First Cause, but as a First Cause which is a Divine and Supreme Intelligence. In other words, the universe is not only causal but also rational. The two terms may ultimately mean the same thing; but they do not mean the same thing to a mechanistic determinist, - at least, not if one uses 'rational' to imply the existence of a

Supreme Reason or Intelligence behind the world.

It must be remembered that we are not concerned here to prove the existence of God. We are merely concerned to see if it is possible to develop a consistent Theistic Determinism which is also Christian.

1. The Dependence of the Individual.

Let us consider, then, an individual life on a deterministic or Calvinistic hypothesis. The world in which one lives is not created by the individual. We may say that he molds certain parts of it and affects many of its elements; but in the main it is determined by other things than man. A man is born into this world-of-a-particular-sort, where things act according to certain apparently fixed laws. He is born at a particular time in the history of the world, when certain definite conditions characterize it. Over these things the individual has no control, yet they greatly affect the course of his life. The background of his existence is made for him and not by him. The motions of the stars, the movements of the tides, the rotation of seasons, the mountains and the valleys, the rivers and the seas, - all these are things which greatly affect the life of a man but are not made by him. We are born into the world, to take it as we find it and make the best of it.

But it may be replied that in making the best of it we are showing our individuality, expressing our freedom. If we do not make the world, neither does the world make us. No, we are not contending that the physical world which forms the background of our earthly lives makes us. We are only saying that it affects us, and we are perfectly willing to admit that we affect it. But our affect upon it is often very much over-emphasised by optimistic theologians. There are a few instances in history where people have "made the desert blossom like a rose"; and there are doubtless a good many thousands of acres of land reclaimed from rivers and swamps. But generally it is the desert which dictates terms to those who inhabit it; and there is a limit to the control of rivers and the reclamation of swamps. So far in the history of man, the deserts and the mountains, the rivers and the seas, the forests and the plains, have had far more effect upon men than men have had upon them. We may mine our ore from the mountains and sail our ships on the sea; but the fact remains that we have to conform our lives to them, instead of conforming them to our desires. We may sometimes overcome



them when they stand in the way of the fulfilment of our desires; but they are there to be overcome, and we have to take them as we find them. The world may have been made for us; but it was not made by us. We may be the lords of creation; but we are still ourselves only creatures. There is no use having an exaggerated idea of our importance. We are still merely sojourners in the world, pilgrims, not owners; and do what we will, one day we all strike our tents and depart. In the end we are defeated by the world.

## 2. The Individual Is Nothing Apart from God.

But now, admitting all this; admitting that our lives are much circumscribed, that the apparent alternatives before us in any situation are very limited; yet are we not free within that small area, and does not this limited freedom enable us to control our own eternal destiny, if the grave is not the end of life, and the universe is moral?

In answering this question let us consider for a moment what we are ourselves. All men share in common this background of the physical world, and a good many share the particular geographical conditions of any one area. In addition there is the social environment or

the civilization, the nation, the smaller social group, and the home. These also are things into which a man is born. He may effect changes in them later; but not until they have affected him. But what determines his reaction to this and the larger, more strictly physical environment? The character of the man himself. But what, over and above these things, determines a man's character? The first thing of course is his heredity, his physical and mental inheritance from his parents and the long line of his ancestors. All these things help to determine the character of the man himself; he neither makes nor chooses any of them.

But in addition to all this, one will say, there is the individual nature of the man himself, something over and above both heredity and environment. That is the thing which in the last analysis determines the individual's destiny. It is in this that freedom is grounded. But the man had no more choice with regard to his nature than he had with regard to his heredity and environment. His nature, if anything more than heredity, is created by God. To begin with the man no more makes himself than he makes the world in which he lives.

a. Some form of Determinism inevitable in a rational universe.

But one will say this is all beside the point. We are not concerned with what a man is to start with, but what he does after he is started. He cannot be free to

choose whether he will be or not, because he does not even exist to make the choice. Nor can he choose his individual nature to start with, nor his physical and mental inheritance, nor his environment. But once he has been created and placed in a particular setting, then he is free to make the best of the situation and is morally responsible to do so. Let us take the case, then, of deciding what one is to do in a particular situation. To all appearances one seems to have freedom of choice, within the limits prescribed by the circumstances. I may not be able to do whatever I want to do regardless of circumstances; but it seems that I can do what I want to do within the limits prescribed. For instance, a man who is dying may not be able to choose to live. He may choose to live in the sense of desiring to, but the choice is not open to him. He is certainly not free to do whatever he wants to do. Neither is he free to choose the particular physical circumstances of the kind of death he will die. But it does seem that he will be able to choose how he will behave under the circumstances. He will be brave or cowardly; he will be calm and quiet in spite of pain, or he will be terrified and cry out in his agony; he will be solicitous of the welfare of his loved ones, or he will be

only concerned with the dreadfulness of his own predicament and the uncertainty of his own future; he will long for the blessedness of eternal life in Christ, or else will be afraid to leave this familiar world in which he has come to feel at home. But what he does depends on what he is, and what he is depends on what he was to start with plus what he has experienced and done in the course of his life. But in no single instance has there been any real choice. Every decision has been similiarly determined by the present circumstances plus the past that has gone into the making of the individual himself.

But it will be said that there are very different meanings of 'causality' and that we must not think of motives and desires in the same way we think of physical causes. Certainly not; but motives and desires are causes nevertheless, and the effects are as inevitable.<sup>1)</sup> We need not think of the situation in mechanical terms at all; but given a particular individual in a particular situation, and a particular result is inevitable, if the law of causality really is universal. And if not, it seems that we are left with the impossible position of having to maintain the equilibrium of the will. In other words that the individual

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1) See Edwards, "On the Will," Part 2, Sect.10.



himself does not determine his own conduct under the circumstances, but it is a mere matter of chance between a limited number of alternatives. If one thinks Determinism undermines the foundations of morality, what can be said for this strictly irrational element of real chance? If it is foolish to hold a man responsible for his conduct on a deterministic basis, it is worse than foolish even to mention responsibility in a world in which there is actually equilibrium of the human will, so that a man's actions are beyond his own control and just happen for no reason at all, without any cause or any sufficient ground. If such were the case, it would not only be the law of causality which would have to be discarded as not universal, the very rationality of the universe would have to be thrown over as well.

Some form of Determinism seems inevitable in a rational world. But many prefer to speak of Self-Determination, thereby either avoiding committing themselves on deeper metaphysical questions or supposing that they are thus solving the whole problem without really being Determinists, -without really precluding the possibility of human freedom. The idea is that everything is free to express itself, that the only thing impeding a man is his own character. Such a view is

thoroughly Calvinistic, and thoroughly deterministic. For the point is, what determines a man's character. Is it wholly a matter of chance? Or is it determined by the chain of circumstances we have already mentioned: heredity, environment, his original nature as he was created by God, plus the extraneous elements in the circumstances of his life over which he obviously has no control? It seems that the man himself is only part of some larger whole. He is in no sense an independent being, a member of a pluralistic universe. In the end it all goes back to God. God makes the world what it is, and He makes us what we are. We do nothing but what He decrees; we are nothing but what He makes us.

The doctrines of Creation, Providence, and Predestination force us to adopt a deterministic view of the world; Determinism leads ultimately to Monism. Each individual is but part of a larger whole, the universe itself. If all that I do is decreed by God and determined by my character and the circumstances in which I am placed, and my character is itself decreed by God, then in the last analysis I am nothing and God is all.

b. Not the common-sense view.

This may seem strange and far-fetched to people who take a common-sense view of life. It makes the

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whole experience of life far different from what it seems. But it is far different from what it seems. The world in which we live seems as far as ordinary vision is concerned a comparatively small, flat surface with a solid blue dome overhead, in which many small lights shine at night. And for thousands of years the rank and file of men thought it was so. But it is not. Until quite recently all of us thought that tables and chairs, and all so-called solid objects, actually were solid. And now the physicists tell us they are not solid at all. According to Professor Eddington,<sup>1)</sup> if all the interstices in the human body were removed and the actually solid matter were collected into one compact thoroughly solid body, it would be about the size of a microscopic pin point. What appears to us a solid body is really a million infinitesimal solar systems, with open spaces as large proportionally as the spaces in the stellar universe. Things just are not what they seem.

We seem to be free, separate, distinct, more or less independent individuals. But when we begin to look for ourselves, we are hard to find. Self consciousness seems a basic fact in our experience. And so it is. There is something more than brain motions and mental

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1) Gifford Lectures, Edinburgh, 1927.

## MONISM

states. But the something more is not itself independent and free. It is a created thing. It acts according to a definitely decreed plan. It fits into a certain scheme of things. It plays a definite, prearranged, foreordained part in a physico-spiritual universe.

It has no existence apart from that universe. And that universe has no existence apart from God.

3. No place for Calvin's Pluralism.

Calvin continually speaks as if we were other than God, as if God acted upon us, secured His will by constraining us to obey Him unconsciously. And yet when he is definitely dealing with the problem he contends that God acts through us, that every mental state is determined by Him. Now it would seem that there can be no half-way ground. Either we are ultimately and actually other than God, independent, free creatures, either always coerced by God because He is more powerful than we, or else sufficiently powerful in ourselves to stand against Him and thwart Him occasionally; or else we are not ultimately and actually other than God, and He alone is the one and only real actor.

But if we are ultimately and actually other than God, and it is necessary for Him to coerce us, even though He does it without our knowing it, then we must



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have certain mental states which are independent of Him. He may have created us **originally**, He may be able to use us and manipulate us always so that we do just His will; but we are other than He and He is forced to take account of us, and therefore there ~~must~~ now be something in our mental life which is as it is simply because of ourselves and not because of God. Otherwise there can be no such complete otherness as this pluralistic view requires.

But where in a deterministic universe there can be found a place for such otherness it is hard to see. Pluralism of any sort means a plurality of creators; and a plurality of creators means that there is in the world today an element of real Freedom, and hence uncertainty. Our attitudes and conduct may be overridden and controlled; but according to such a view, they are not determined. On such a theory God created me to start with, but now I am other than He and in some respects at least independent of Him. But I cannot be in any sense independent of Him if He determines everything that I am and think and do. Therefore if I am in such sense other than He, I am to that extent free, and to that extent there is no Determinism, no Providence, and

no Predestination. This may not affect the ultimate end of things. It is no doubt the view which Calvin himself took of the situation, and is doubtless the view of most who today call themselves Calvinists. But it is not the view logically deducible from Calvin's major doctrines of Providence and Predestination.

And besides, it is very difficult to see how even God could make something truly and ultimately other than Himself, to any degree independent of Himself. If God made me and made the world in which I live, then I can in no sense be ultimately independent of Him, a creator myself, without there being a break in the causal order. For if I create something apart from God, even though it be but a mental state, an attitude of mind, there is a break in the chain of cause and effect; something absolutely new has come into being for which there is no root in the past. It does not suffice to say that I created this thing and God created me, therefore the causal order is not actually broken. For if the existence of this thing is to be linked up to the past in any such way as that and the causal chain is not to be broken, then the ultimate creator even of this mental state is God, and the very case we are supposing becomes an impossibility.<sup>1)</sup>

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 1) See Etienne Gilson's "Le Thomisme," ch.8., where he says: "Si tel est bien le mode de production que l'on désigne par le nom de création, il apparaît immédiatement que Dieu peut créer et qu'il est le seul à pouvoir créer. --- Dire que Dieu est cause universelle de tout l'être, pris dans sa totalité, c'est donc affirmer que Dieu est capable de créer. --- Or, il faut savoir que la notion de créature créatrice est contradictoire." (p.96.)

Universal causality, Determinism, Monism; in the end  
there is only God.

The Problem of Creation.

But if this is so, what is left of the Calvinistic doctrine of Creation, on which we have depended to some extent for our arrival at Monism? We have grounded our Determinism in God's creation of us and the world. But if in the end there is nothing other than God, in what sense can there be any creation? God simply is, and that is the end of it. Creation does seem to imply some degree or form of otherness.

1. Artistic 'Creation' perhaps a Dim and Distant Analogy.

But how can there be any such thing as creation? what is it? Professor James Ward suggests in his *Realm of Ends*,<sup>1)</sup> that perhaps the 'creative activity' of the artist is somewhat akin to the creative activity of God. And if I remember correctly Professor Bowman of Glasgow holds a similiar view,<sup>2)</sup> that creation ex nihilo is not creation out of nothing; but simply that all things come to be in God's experience. If I understand what these men mean, it is a view which reduces itself to a Theistic form of Idealism. In any case it is from their suggestions that I present the following as a possible surmise. I

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 1) Ward, "Realm of Ends," pp.238ff.

2) Paper before the Philosophy Club of Yale University, 1926.

presume we can never know definitely how the world was created, or just what is its nature. We can only speculate and seek for a consistent theory. Our attempt therefore at present is merely to present a possible development of a Theistic form of Determinism. There seems no way of saying with any dogmatic assurance that it is a true metaphysic. One can only believe it or reject it because of certain definite reasons for doing so.

a. The 'Anthropomorphic' as Intelligible as the "Mechanical".

I am not sure but that this view will seem a very crude one. There is much in it which would lay it open to that most condemnatory charge of being 'anthropomorphic'. But personally I should prefer it to be called 'anthropomorphic' to 'mechanical'; for surely there is as much reality in man as in a machine, - man is of quite as high an order of being, and in any case it is only one analogy against another. We seem forced to try to understand unseen and unknown things in terms of something we appear to know already, and I can see no objections applicable to 'anthropomorphic' representations which do not apply equally well to 'mechanical'. Certainly <sup>a</sup>man is as intelligible apart from all knowledge of mechanics as a machine is apart <sup>from</sup> all knowledge of man. We may not be able to



discover ourselves, and may not know what we are; but we seem to know as little about mechanical things. If we cannot posit a knower without some form of mechanism no more can we posit the knowledge of mechanical things without a knower. What we call 'intelligence' seems quite as fundamental and intelligible as what we call a 'mechanism'.

b. The Biblical Account.

In the 2nd chapter of Genesis, verse 7, we read,

"And Jehovah God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul."

We understand this figuratively. Even prior to a belief in Evolution, few people indeed thought of God as moulding a figure out of dirt and making it alive by breathing into it. But it is not at all unlikely that the original writer of this passage understood it literally. We have little difficulty in supposing that the neighbouring people of the Mesopotamian valley understood their similar story of the creation or making of man literally; and apart from pure assumption we have no grounds for thinking the Hebrews took an entirely different view of the situation. The thing they were attempting to account for was the existence of man. It is most natural to suppose that they really thought of God as doing exactly what they here speak of Him as doing. And in looking for a material from which He could form man there

was none so likely to them as the very substance of the earth itself. Evidently the earth was in existence before man, for we know that it exists apart from man, in that there are parts of it uninhabited, whereas man is only known as living upon it. As a matter of fact, what else could they suppose man to be made of? Earth was the most basic thing they knew. And modern scientific knowledge or theory seems to substantiate their view. Man as a physical organism was made from the dust of the ground, and it must have been God who breathed into him the breath of life and made him a living soul; since we can account for it still in no other way. But we think of the process as different. God formed man from the dust of the ground, not as a sculptor would model his clay into a human figure, - which is evidently the way the ancient writer thought of it, since it is clearly the way he spoke of it, and he gives us no other clue to its interpretation, - but by the long process of evolution.

But now to form man in any way out of previously existing matter is not creation, in the strict sense. It is a creative act to make something entirely new, such as man, out of materials already existing which did not in themselves have the potentiality of becoming what was formed from them.

But creation in the last analysis really means creation of the whole, material as well as form. And it is so understood probably both in the Bible and in Christian theology, for both in the first and second chapters of Genesis it speaks of the heavens and the earth as being created. In any case, whatever critical scholars may think of the teaching of the first two chapters of Genesis, Christian theologians have not posited some eternally existing matter for God to work upon, but have taught that creation was ex nihilo, - by which should be meant, not that 'nothing' is the material from which God formed the universe, but simply that nothing but God existed prior to creation, whether we take 'prior' in a chronological or merely in a logical sense. In other words, the doctrine is simply that God actually created all that is. And the orthodox Christian view has most emphatically not been that God took some part of Himself and from that made a world or a universe. God created a world, brought it into being - as something in some sense other than Himself, yet as never existing apart from Himself. For Christian Theologians have ever maintained, not only that God created the world, but that He sustains it and that it is eternally dependent upon Him.

In the 1st chapter of Genesis we read, at the 1st verse,

"In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth."

And then after an account which accords most remarkably with our modern idea of the order of the evolutionary process, we read that after God had made all the beasts of the earth He said,

"Let us make man in our image, after our likeness".  
(verse 26).

Now this cannot possibly be orthodoxly interpreted as referring to the body of man; for God is a spiritual being and has no body. But again we cannot be certain that the understanding we must have of this verse is necessarily that which the original writer had of it. What for us refers to spirit may for him have referred to a being whose elements were undifferentiated. But the fact remains that we think of God as a spirit, like unto what we conceive to be the spiritual or mental part of ourselves. In other words God is a Mind, and so far, we must say, only a Mind.

## 2. The Divine Creation a Purely Mental Activity.

But if God is pure Mind, creation must have been a purely mental activity. Or, we should say, God created the world simply by thought. Thus the creative activity of the artist is like the creative activity of God. But it is not the work of the artist as it is displayed on the canvas or on



paper, for in order for it to take this form bodily activity is required, in addition to that of mind, and the use of previously existing materials. The artistic creative activity analogous to that of God, is the creation of the picture or the play, the novel or the symphony, in the mind of the artist, before the colour is ever put on canvas or the words or notes on paper. Here indeed we have what from our standpoint truly approaches the creative; for there is no utilization of previously existing and external materials. It is true that the artist makes use of his past experience, which in his case involves contact with an external world, and probably also involves the use of images of things previously existing and external. But all that is needed at the time of the 'creation' is what the 'creator' himself brings to the work. External things may have entered in to cause or produce the different thought elements which are used by the mind of the artist, but these external things are not themselves used by the mind of the artist at the time of 'creation'. An external stimulus may be required to arouse the human 'creator' to his work, but this stimulus does not itself enter into the 'creative' act as a factor in it. Its influence ceases with the beginning of the 'creative' act itself. Perhaps it is impossible for the human mind to produce in thought any single element which it has not previously experienced, and all it can do is to

produce new combinations. Or perhaps there is nothing really external to the human mind. These are questions which do not concern us here. The only qualification we are required to make is that God's creative activity must of necessity differ from ours in this respect that according to the hypothesis of a Divine Creator there is nothing external to Him which could serve in any way to produce images in His mind. We should expect that His creative activity would be different in this regard. Yet the analogy is still quite appropriate to indicate the form of this activity, and it even lends some measure of probability that this is the actual form of the Divine Creation. As far as the materials of the work are concerned we need only the mind of the creator; and though in the case of the human artist we must postulate a past rich in experience in order to have a present ripe with understanding, in the case of God we need postulate no such acquirement of knowledge, since He is to begin with the epitome of all wisdom.

- a. The World exists only in God's Mind - or rather in God,  
for He is only Mind.

This work of creation, however, is wholly imaginary. It is not only the work of the mind; it exists only in the mind. The world in which we live, we ourselves, exist only in the mind of God.

This does not mean that we and the world are unreal. It simply means that we do not exist in the same realm of reality as the Creator. The symphony in the mind of the composer is not unreal; it does not first come into existence with its transcription to paper. It exists the moment it is thought, but it does not exist on the same level, or one might say, in the same world, as the composer himself. The symphony itself can never exist in the physical world of the composer's body. It is always a mental thing, though the moment it is put on paper what may be called its physical equivalent exists in the physical world of the composer's body. And the moment it is read or heard by another mind, it exists in the world of the composer's mind as a thing outside his mind. But as long as it remains in his mind, it does not exist on the same level of reality as his mind.

b. The Two Realms of Reality.

This may be brought out more clearly by thinking of the work of the novelist or dramatist. As the story or play exists in the mind of the writer, it is wholly imaginary. Its characters are real in the imaginary world of the story or play, but they are not real in the world of men. As soon as the novel or play is transcribed to paper, something comes into being in the physical world which enables other people to

Imagine the characters and plot which formerly existed only in the mind of the writer himself. There come to be then as many little imaginary worlds in which these characters, or characters like them, and this plot, or a plot like it, exist, as there are readers of the novel or readers and witnesses of the play. 1) Something mental comes into being outside the mind of the writer, which attaches itself to the book and exists in the world of men's minds. But it is not the characters nor the world in which they live in the mind of the writer. These never exist in the world of men, even in the world of men's minds. The only thing which exists in the external world of minds is the description of them. This is a mental thing, something more than the writing on the paper; it is the meaning or significance of the writing on the paper. It has real existence as an object in the realm of minds. But it requires the previous existence of a mental world outside the mind of the writer, the existence of other minds and, except perhaps in very rare cases, the use of physical means of

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1) In the case of the acting of the play what is written is visualized in the common physical world of men. Yet it is not the ordinary world but an imaginary, sort of picture world, which in turn produces in the minds of witnesses a purely mental world which is its counterpart.



communication. The image in the writer's mind is never an object for other minds, but only some description of it. Therefore it is only the description which has what we may call reality in the mental world in which the writer's mind exists. The world of the story or play as it exists in his mind is always a different world from this.

In the realm where God dwells there is only God.

We live only in the world of His thought. If we interpret Kant's phenomenal and noumenal as being what in ordinary language we call the physical and the spiritual, or mental, worlds, we may say that God exists beyond both of them, and that both of these exist only in His mind or imagination. It is in this way that

"in Him we live and move and have our being".

It is so that He determines all the events of our lives just as an author determines the lives of his characters. They can do nothing but by his will; yet they are not conscious of his constraint, simply because they do not live in the same realm in which he lives. As the author is governed by his desire to make his story conform in some measure to the facts of the world in which he lives, so God is governed by His character. But it is God who determines all things.

## RECONCILIATION.

- c. The Reconciliation of the two historic conceptions of God -  
'God the Creator' and 'God the Power for Righteousness'.

But now if we exist only in the thought of God, then we exist in entirely different realms, and while God as our Creator determines all things which we do or think, since in His thought He creates us as self-conscious thinking beings somewhat like Himself, yet we being only creatures of His imagination can have no knowledge of Him or communion with Him. This situation, then, simply makes religion impossible. The world is in God, but God is not in the world. But men feel some Power for Righteousness working in the world, which they call God, and prayer is considered the experience of communing with Him. Christian theology is based upon the supposition of the possibility of eternal fellowship with Him. But clearly fellowship with Him is not possible if He does not even exist in our world. We have here two different conceptions which run through all the Scriptures and through all Christian theology. How to reconcile them into one God, is the problem. Nothing can exist in our world save as it exists in the thought of God. If God, then, is to exist in our world, He must think Himself to be an actor in the drama of our existence.

3. Creation an Eternal Activity of the Divine Mind.

It is the function of minds to think, and thought is inevitably creative within the mind thinking. Creation

## RECONCILIATION.

is then an eternal activity of the Divine Intelligence.<sup>1)</sup> But it is also the function of minds to conceive ends and have purposes; else the thinking is mere irrational wandering. But the existence of purpose implies desire, and desire implies a lack. But now, how is it possible for God the Omnipotent Creator to lack anything? How is it possible for Him, then, to create a teleological universe?

If the universe is not teleological, it is not rational. If there is no purposeful thread running through all the events of the world, there is no rational order in it at all<sup>2)</sup>. It is not enough that it be the creation of a mind; it must be unified by a purpose of that mind.

The Divine Purpose.

But what purpose can exist for an Omnipotent Divine Intelligence? What lack can there be for Omnipotence? The simple fact of the matter is that the more omnipotent God is, the more infinite and eternal, the more alone He is. There must inevitably be for Him a lack

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- 1) See Prof. Pringle - Pattison's "The Idea of God," ch.16. See also Gilson, "Le Thomisme," pp.110,111 where he affirms: "Thomas d'Aquin maintient la possibilité d'un commencement de l'univers dans le temps, mais il maintient aussi, même contra murmurantes, la possibilité de son éternité."
  - 2) See Gilson, "Le Thomisme," p.97.- "On est obligé de reconnaître que l'univers est ordonné en vue d'une certaine fin; s'il en était autrement, tout, dans l'univers, se produirait par hasard."

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of fellowship. There are no other gods. There are no other minds save as He creates them in His own. This lack, then, may be sufficient to account for the existence of desire. But while it is a lack, it is not a deficiency in power. The desire is not a thwarted desire.

1. Implies no limitation of God's Infinity and Omnipotence.

Since creation may, or rather, must be eternal, it need not be a desire which ever exists apart from its gratification. Its existence, however, is enough to give purpose to thought, an end and order to the world created. The purpose of the world is that God may have fellowship with other minds, some of which, at least, are men. But in order to have fellowship with these other minds which exist only within His mind, He must think Himself into their world. The Intellectual Creator can never have fellowship with His creatures without Himself becoming a Creature.

Now I grant that this is a most anthropomorphic way of speaking, and that there is no necessity apparent to us why the Infinite and Omnipotent One should feel any need or desire for fellowship. But the fact remains that the universe exists, and unless it is itself God, - in which case there is no possibility for religion or any objective moral standard either, presumably, - there must be some reason for the creation in God Himself, if He



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is a Mind and the world is rational. And as we have tried to indicate, this feeling of need or desire does not imply any inability to satisfy it on God's part. It does imply a certain insufficiency in God apart from creation; but this need be nothing more than the insufficiency of a mind which was not thinking. Since it is the function of a mind to think, there is no incapacity for thought involved in the conception of a mind. It is simply impossible to think of a live mind as not thinking. Why God should think in this way instead of in some other, is a matter we cannot determine. What His purpose in creating the world is, is a mere matter of conjecture as far as we are concerned. But we can conjecture in the light of the teaching of Christ and certain reasonable presuppositions. And in accord with these I have merely suggested that God's purpose in creation may have been the securing of fellowship with other minds.<sup>1)</sup> It is the nature of minds to think; and it is the nature of thought to direct itself to ends. If God is a mind, the inability to think in accord with a definite purpose would be a greater deficiency than

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 1) This idea of the Divine desire for fellowship, plus the older idea of the Divine purpose being the manifestation of the Divine glory, or as it would be better expressed - a desire to have others share in the Divine blessedness (see Pringle - Pattison, op.cit., pp.308f especially quotation from the Timaeus.), puts content into the Christian conception of Love as the Supreme Power in the universe; for Love not only desires to give itself, but craves the presence of the beloved. There is no reason why these two ideas of the Divine purpose should not be combined. As a matter of fact the former seems to include the latter.

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**that** implied by the existence of a purpose in His thought. The only alternative to purposive thought for the Divine Intelligence seems to be complete inactivity. But the existence of purpose implies no lack of omnipotence, since this would only be implied in the inability to accomplish what is purposed. And it implies no denial of infinity, since it is something which is accomplished within itself. If the creation is wholly within God's mind, it shows not the previous insufficiency of His mind, but rather its potentialities and ability. Besides, there need not have been anything previous at all. In the Divine Mind the fulfilment may be simultaneous with the desire. And the desire and fulfilment may be both alike eternal. So there seems to be no teleological dilemma involved.

2. A Purpose Certain of Fulfilment Implies Ultimate Monism.

There seem but three possibilities in an Idealist universe. Either there is no purpose in the universe, - in which case it is wholly irrational, and it is extremely difficult to see how it could in any sense be the result of the activity of Mind, since a mind without a purpose of some sort would appear to be an absolutely inactive mind. Or else, if there is purpose it may be of two kinds: either a purpose sure of fulfilment as we have supposed - in which case the Divine Mind can be said to be Infinite and Omnipotent; or else a purpose which is uncertain, -

in which case the Divine Mind is neither infinite nor omnipotent, and the result is probably a Pluralism in which nothing is certain of accomplishment, and the whole universe is simply on its way, like a ship in a hurricane.

A Spiritual Pluralism within the Universe.

But if a desire for fellowship is the key to the activity of the Divine Mind, then, as we have seen, God must think Himself into our world. But God-as-He-thinks-Himself-in-the-world can be neither infinite nor omnipotent, and the result is that within the mind of the Creator we have a Spiritual Pluralism. It is as though a man contemplated in imagination the events of some future time in which he himself was an actor. As the thinker of these events he would determine them. Nothing would happen save as he thought it to be; the incidents would be exactly as he willed them; all the actors would do exactly as he decreed; and the outcome would be in complete accord with his desire (provided his imagination was not too much hampered by a regard to a pessimistic conception of human possibilities). But as an actor in this little drama of his mind he would not determine all the events. He would be merely one among others, more powerful perhaps than they, ultimately successful in his attempts to secure his own ends

through interaction, with them. But the relation would be one of interaction, and the others would be free from his absolute control. And thus it is that God may be the Omnipotent Creator and Governor of the Universe and at the same time the Force for Righteousness within the World. In the one capacity He determines all things, and "in Him we live and move and have our being"; in the other He is continually striving with us and trying to win us to Himself.

Now it is not possible here to do more than suggest this as a possible scheme for working out consistently the Deterministic elements in Calvinism to their logical conclusions and at the same time showing the way in which this Deterministic Monism may be reconciled with the orthodox Christian theology. To carry out this reconciliation in every detail would require the writing of a complete text on Christian Theology, and to justify it as a philosophical view of the world, substantiating every point, refuting all objections, working out all the implications, would require a life time of careful labor to accomplish even partially. It is our purpose to do neither of these things. As far as the particular doctrines of Christian theology are concerned,



it will suffice to say that there need be little or no change at all in any of them. All the doctrines which imply a deterministic view of the world may be referred to God the Creator, the only ultimate Reality; all which imply a pluralistic freedom on the part of men may be referred to God as He thinks Himself to dwell amongst us.

If it be asked how we know these are one and the same, the reply must be that we don't. The whole scheme is a purely speculative attempt to reconcile two apparently contradictory conceptions of God which have come down to us from the Bible and run through all subsequent Christian theology. It is a purely speculative attempt to solve the problems of Calvinism in a manner consistent with its main tenets, while at the same time retaining the complete Christian conception of God as a Loving Father and a Force for Righteousness within the world of men.

#### The Problem of Evil.

But now, as we have seen, the great problem which Calvin was never able to solve consistently with his deterministic principles was the Problem of Evil; and it may not be at all clear how our scheme of Theistic Monism helps us out of the difficulty.

To begin with it will be advisable to contrast this view with a Monism such as that of Spinoza. Whatever its other difficulties, the Monism of Spinoza<sup>1)</sup> (and all subsequent forms of Absolute Idealism similiar to it) seemed to leave no place at all for moral standards, since according to this view God was everything, and whatever could be said of the world could be said of God. Either, then, it seemed that God was good and bad together, or else moral distinctions were a mere illusion without any objective

validity whatever. But how there could be people with illusions was also a mystery, since the people were merely aspects of God and the partial character of their thought must in some way characterize Him as well as them. They were, according to this view, part of God; but they had characteristics which were not applicable to God.

Now the theory we are propounding avoids this difficulty by the supposition of intellectual creation on the part of God. We are not, according to this view, in any such way a part of God. We exist only in His thought; but we are thought to be other than He. We do not exist on the same level of reality at all. Therefore what applies to us need not logically apply to God. We do not exist

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1) See Spinoza's "Ethics," Part I.

apart from God; but there is no identifying us with God. We are as different from God as the characters of a novel are from its author. We are what we are because He makes us so; we are entirely dependent upon Him for our very being itself. Yet we exist in an entirely different realm from that in which He exists. If one asks how it is possible for us to have self-consciousness, awareness of ourselves and of the world, if we are not real in the same sense and in the same realm as that in which God is real; the reply is simply: How do we have self-consciousness anyway? The whole matter is a mystery. The characters in a novel or a play have self-consciousness and are aware of the world of the novel or the play in a similiar way to that in which we are aware of our world, from the standpoint of one outside our world. Yet one will reply that this is pure simile, that the characters of a work of fiction have no real self-consciousness at all, nor any real awareness, No, they have none in our world;- simply because they do not really exist - from our standpoint. But within the world of the novel or the play they have real existence, and they have real self-consciousness and awareness as well. Their consciousness is just as real as they are; and what more can be said of us? Is the self-consciousness of fictional characters any different from that of historical to one who observes their world from outside?

We may be ignorant and sinful without God's being ignorant and sinful, simply because while we only exist in God, God does not exist in us. What Paul said was, "In Him we live and move and have our being"; not, "In us He lives and moves and has His being." And there is a tremendous difference. Again, while God may not be ignorant and sinful, this does not mean that ignorance and sin have no reality. These qualities may relate to us without relating to God, simply because we exist in a different realm from God. Ignorance and sin may be characteristics of our world without having any place whatever in God; just as an author may introduce evil characters into his novel without himself being evil.

The point which determines the character of the novelist is not the existence of evil characters in the novel, but the part they play, and what becomes of them. Or rather, the character of the novelist is disclosed in his own attitude of approval or disapproval of the part they play and what becomes of them; for it is right here that the analogy with God breaks down, since the novelist is giving an interpretation of life and not making it to suit his own ideals, and he may conceivably represent evil as triumphing over good without himself approving of this outcome, though of course his pessimism may not be justified philosophically. With



God, however, the case in this respect is different, since He is really creating the world and not merely producing an interpretation of anything which already exists outside Himself. The significant detail, however, is simply that in both cases the existence of ignorant and sinful characters within the world of thought, their creation, indeed, does not imply either ignorance or sin in the character of the author.

1. God Himself the Ultimate Moral Standard.

But until we have decided what 'evil' is, there is no use asking whether or not it really exists, and if it does, how it gets into the world. The first thing we must know is, what is 'good' and what is 'evil'; and this is just what it seems most difficult to find out. Within the confines of Christian theology one may be allowed to assume that God is good. And as a matter of fact it would seem that from any Theistic view of the world we must begin here: God is good.

But now most people when they say this act as if they were giving a judicial opinion which they had come to accept through experience or an investigation of the facts, and the implication is that were He discovered to be bad, they have nothing more to do with Him. Now this whole attitude on the part of theologians and others implies that

there is an objective standard of right and wrong which is external to God and may therefore be applied to Him as it is to everything else. They say it exists in the very nature of things; but what they forget is that 'the very nature of things' exists in God. There is no standard of good and evil, of right and wrong, apart from God. Whatever ideas we have on the subject are there because He put them there, and they are most faulty and inadequate with regard to everything other than our own conduct; and they will in most cases barely suffice there, if at all. It is the height of presumption to begin judging God and the universe by our standards, as though we and our standards were something apart from God and the universe. We may very well say that from our standpoint God and the universe are so and so; but we must always remember that our standpoint may be neither correct nor adequate.

The correctness and adequacy of our standards is determined by their conformity with the universe and God. What God calls good, is good. And nothing other than what He calls good, is good. But since God alone exists in the ultimate realm of reality, His conception of goodness depends solely upon what He Himself is. And since there is nothing external to Himself to exert

any influence upon Him, whatever He does is exactly what He wants to do, and whatever He creates is exactly as He wants it to be. And it is therefore good. Because goodness in the last analysis is simply relative to the desires of persons. Whatever a man desires is to him good. It may not be good for him; but it is because he either does not know, or doubts, this that it is good to him. For as Plato contends, nobody deliberately chooses what he knows to be evil.<sup>1)</sup> But this does not mean that nobody ever chooses what he believes to be morally evil: it merely means that in such a case the man does not believe in the ultimate truth or worth of the moral distinctions.

For God there are no moral distinctions as such.

What He is may determine what He desires; but what He desires determines what is good to Him. And there is no question of what is good for Him, since He is forever the same.

## 2. The Universe Wholly Good - "The Best of All Possible Worlds".

Because He is omnipotent, therefore, and there is nought beyond Himself to restrain His will, the universe is exactly as He desires it to be; and it is consequently from His standpoint, good. But it exists, as we have

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1) See also "Compendium of the Summa" of St. Thomas, p.56, where it is said: "Evil, as such, cannot attract any one's desire, natural, animal or intellectual."

said, only in His thought. Whatever, therefore, exists in His thought, is good. And since He can think whatever He wants to think, all that is good exists in His thought. In the realm of the reality of our universe, therefore, all that is is good, and all that is good is. Evil, therefore, not only does not exist; 1) all that does not exist is evil, since if it were not evil it would exist.

But we must bear in mind here that we are speaking of 'good' and 'evil' from God's standpoint, and that God sees all that is in its entirety. Using the term Ultimate Reality to designate the realm of God the Creator, and Reality to designate the realm of the universe, we may say that the whole of Reality is good. But there may be parts of Reality which taken alone, without their proper relation to the whole, would be evil or bad. The reason, however, that they are good to God is because He sees them in their proper relation to the whole.

Now it may very well be asked how a good universe can be made up of bad parts. The simple answer is that the parts as parts are not bad; they would only be bad if they were the whole of Reality, or if their relation to the whole of Reality were not exactly as it is. This, I think, may be illustrated from the life of a man. Few

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1) See Gilson, op.cit. p..2., where he contends: "Le mal pris en lui-même n'est rien."



people would say that a life filled with nothing but what they called good things was a good life. And by 'a good life' we do not mean a morally good life, for we are not talking about morality at all as yet; we simply mean that such a life is not a life to be desired. If the world were other than it is or we were other than we are, such a life might in its totality be a good life; but the world being what it is and we being what we are, such a life lacks something in its totality. There is no single element of evil in it, but the whole is not good; perhaps simply because there is no variety of satisfactions in it. Most of us would say that a life in which there was a certain amount of hardship and struggle, which things are in themselves, apart from the proper relation to other things, evil or bad from our standpoint, would be a much better life. Only there must not be too much hardship and struggle, and the hardship must be overcome and the struggle lead to good. For a life which was all hardship and struggle we should consider a very bad life; and a life in which the good things resulted in bad, we should consider almost equally undesirable. Thus we see from our own experience that things which in themselves, apart from all else, we should consider bad, often become in their relation to the whole of life good, and

even increase the goodness or desirability of the whole.

And so it may<sup>be</sup> with God. Whatever is we must conclude is good to Him; but it may very well be that some things which apart from all else would be evil to Him are, because of their relation to the whole, good as parts of the whole. It is the universe just as it is that is good to Him; it is not just some small part of it alone: nor is it a slightly different universe with the same elements rearranged in a different order or in different proportions. If He had desired this, He would have made it so, and it would have been good to Him, but since He did not desire it, He did not make it so, and it is not good to Him.

But we must not forget that the universe is in Time, or that Time is real in the universe. Time may have no significance for God Himself. That is, His existence may not be characterized by Time and Space: these may be peculiarities of the world as such. He may see the whole of Reality at once. We cannot imagine what such an existence would be like, nor can we attempt to describe it in any other language than that of our own experience, which is the language of a realm in which there is really such a thing as Time; but for God there may be nothing but a Present which includes all the Past and all the Future. Time, then, for Him may represent simply a

certain order which is not for Him a time order at all. Yet the significant point for us is that within Reality there is a time order, and that being within this time order we necessarily see only a part of the whole. Our view of the universe is therefore necessarily limited and prescribed. Its limitations as to Space are not for our present consideration so important; but its limitation in Time precludes the possibility of our seeing the outcome of events, which can alone justify them. I do not mean justify them in a moral sense, but rather in the sense of making them desirable to God, since it is their outcome rather than any other aspect of them which shows their relation to the whole.

We do not, therefore, know the purpose and plan of God, and we cannot know definitely what is good and bad from His standpoint. We can only surmise, from the little that we see from the inside what the purpose and plan is, and we can only conclude from the supposition of God's omnipotence and infinity that all that we see is in its relation to the whole good. But we can to some extent reason about the character of things in themselves from our observation of what appears to be the major trend in what we see.

### 3. The Dawn of the Moral Consciousness.

But just what is it that we see? And by 'see' here,

one means of course, not just what we see with the physical eye, but what we see as a result of scientific investigation and study. It would be rather generally agreed that what we see is a vast universe in which on one of the planets there has developed after a long process that has occupied millions of years, a form of life which is characterized by the feeling of moral obligation. But what is this feeling of moral obligation? So far there has appeared no morality or moral obligation whatever. Things have been considered simply as what they are because God willed them so. But now, morality and moral obligation implies that things ought to be a certain way, whether they are or not. But from God-the-Creator's standpoint things are exactly as they ought to be. But, as we have seen, this is only because He sees the whole, and not just the part. From our standpoint things as they are at present are not as they ought to be; they are simply in process of becoming so.

Let us return to our supposition that God creates the world for the purpose of having fellowship with beings like Himself. He, then, thinks Himself to exist in our world, in the time order of our world, and as so existing He is striving to bring into being creatures who are conscious of Him and who ~~reciprocate~~ His affection.



## EVOLUTION.

a. The Entrance of Sin into the World.

Now, I may be entirely mistaken, but it seems to me that there is no place in the history of the world for a Fall from human perfection such as is pictured in the 3rd chapter of Genesis. There is, however, a time when there awakes within man a sense of moral obligation and a resulting sense of sin. In the lower orders there appears to be a blind urge to perpetuate individual existence and to realize the apparent possibilities of the particular kind of organism. There is in addition a blind urge to perpetuate the species; and there must at one time have been a marked tendency to push upwards, which resulted in the production of what we should be pleased to call ever higher and higher orders of beings. There was nothing moral, however, in the progress of the lower organisms and the higher animals. And then one day there appeared in the world a strange creature with a dim and dark awareness of himself and of a Power beyond. There was in him, too, the blind urge of the animals; but there was something more: there was this dim awareness of spiritual possibilities, a faint, glimmering light which consciously attracted him, a sense of wonder and awe, a hope of immortality, a mysterious,

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haunting, frightfully dim sense of God, and a desire to draw near to Him. And it was in this religious consciousness that there came to man the knowledge of moral good and evil. The good was immortality and the state of being with God. The bad was to live merely as an animal and to die.

But there were other goods as well. Somewhere in the development of the animal consciousness there had come the awareness that the things which satisfied the appetites of the body were good, - good from the standpoint of the animal because they were desired (and good from the standpoint of the universe because they kept the organism alive and made for the continuance of the species, which was a result desired, though the animal did not know this). And the awareness of these as goods remained in man. There was a new factor, however, a faint sense of comparative values, a feeling that from the standpoint of the universe the spiritual goods were of greater value than the purely physical. And with this sense of comparative values there is born the feeling of moral obligation. In man the urge upwards becomes a conscious feeling of oughtness. He is not by any means fully aware of the purpose and plan of things, he does not see

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clearly why it is that from the standpoint of the universe spiritual goods should be of greater value than the merely physical; but he feels somehow that they are. He has sufficient insight into the nature of things to feel that for him as a man immortality and fellowship with God are more to be desired than the gratification of the physical appetites, and that from the standpoint of the universe it is fitting that they should be more desired. Of course, from the standpoint of the universe they are more to be desired because it is for the possibility of them that all the rest has gone before as a means to their production. Eternal fellowship with God has been all along the end of the whole process. It is that which has given value to what has gone before. But now man does not know all this. He is simply aware of his own being and feels the capacity for fellowship with God; and in addition, the urge toward this end, which has been blindly pushing the animals up to man, has in him come to consciousness in the feeling of oughtness or what we call the feeling of moral obligation.

It is only in man, therefore, that 'the good' takes on the double meaning of that which is desired and that which ought to be desired. But the reason why it ought to be desired is because it generically is desired by God. Man,

of course, does not see this clearly at the time; he is aware only of a very vague feeling of obligation.

The trouble comes when he no longer believes in the desirability of that which he feels obligated to desire. It is not that the feeling of obligatoriness is no longer present, nor is it exactly that he ceases to desire that which he feels obligated to desire. It is simply that there is within him a conflict of desires.

Sin is the deliberate choice of what is felt to be  
morally evil.<sup>1)</sup> The appetites of the body are not evil in themselves; nor is their gratification. The moral conception of good and evil only enters into life with the

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 1) Prof. Mackintosh in "The Christian Experiences of Forgiveness", declares: "Sin in the last resort is radically unintelligible; it is incapable of being interpreted in terms of rational purpose; it is irreducible to factors which in a moral sense can be made transparent and self-accrediting". (p. 61) "We are born self-centred and egoistic, yet when we express our egoism in act or feeling we feel ashamed before God.--- If we have a will at all, it is guilty, free or not; and it is guilty just as being a will, i.e. something original which is no product of exterior constraint, but veritably our own. We are chargeable with sin - behind this fact we cannot go. No ulterior explanations can affect it". (pp. 66f.).



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decision between two goods. Man feels a desire for fellowship with God; he also feels a desire for the gratification of his physical appetites. Which of them is to be the chief end of his life? It is in the wrong deciding of that question that Sin enters into life.

Man feels that he should decide in favor of fellowship with God; but the urge of his lower nature is too strong. And here unbelief comes in. For the basis of all sin is unbelief. Man not only feels that he should seek fellowship with God; his undeveloped reason vaguely tells him that it is the greater good for him. He has the dim feeling that this way lies life, and that way death. But the animal is insistent in its demands. And because the conflict is hard, a real evil, - not in the moral sense but in the sense of being something undesirable in itself apart from its possible results, - man wants to settle it as soon as possible. The easy way is to give the victory to his lower nature, because his desire for the gratification of his appetites is stronger than his desire for fellowship with God, - stronger because more immediate and more persistent in the stressing of its need. But against this stands his feeling of obligation, the belief that

this other course of conduct is right; and in addition the belief that this other is ultimately the greater good, that from the standpoint of wisdom it should be the more desired. But because the lower desires are stronger he wants to yield to them. So he makes it an intellectual issue, and begins to argue against the reasons for the pursuit of fellowship with God as the greater good. It may not be the greater good. What if he gives up the satisfaction of these present and intensely felt desires, and then this good of eternal life is only a snare and a delusion? What does he know about the nature of things? And then what finally decides the issue is his acceptance of the age-long word of the devil, "Ye shall not surely die". The feeling of obligation still remains, but deprived of the aid of its intellectual support it is insufficient to withstand the onslaughts of passion. Man chooses what he feels to be morally evil, the way of death; because he comes to doubt that it is really evil, in the sense of being ultimately bad for him.

Man sins, therefore, because he deliberately chooses the course which he feels to be the wrong course. And he chooses this voluntarily, because he wants to. But it is obvious that he could not do otherwise. He wants to choose

this way because the lower desires are stronger than the higher. The spiritual side of man's nature is young and undeveloped. It offers courageous resistance; but it cannot conquer the strength of a million years. The country it seeks is a far country; the glow it follows is a dim glow. But the country is ever there, and the glow is never completely extinguished for the race. It may die out forever in individual cases; but if so, it is because the individual stifles it and becomes ultimately blind through continued unbelief. It is only the eye of faith that ever sees it; and when faith dies, the glow dies too. And thus it is that for all men there is sin, - original sin, because it comes as a result of our inheritance. No man follows the light always. But some there are, the chosen of the Father, who rise again and follow on, in spite of defeat and failure, seeking God - because more than their fellows they have felt the pressure of His hand.

From the standpoint of the Creator the existence of Sin in the world is not an evil. It may be an evil in itself; it would most certainly be an evil if it were the end of things, for as far as the individual is concerned it tends in itself towards death and destruction, and the opposite of eternal fellowship with God. But in the scheme of things it is necessary to the ultimate fulfillment of the purpose. It might have been otherwise if God had willed it so (though

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being as He is He could not have willed it otherwise); but in the world as He thinks it to be, progress comes only through struggle and failure. The many fail, a few attain. That is the reality of it from our standpoint. It is no idle play as far as we are concerned.

"Many are called, but few are chosen";  
 "for wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat: because strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it". (Matthew 20 : 16 [only in K. James]; Matthew 7 : 13, 14).

It means life or death to us. But if it were not for the reality of sin, the alternatives would not even appear real to us. It is the experience of choosing the wrong which makes us see how possible it is from our standpoint. It is the apparent blindness and death of some which is a warning to the rest. Nothing draws a man to God like a sense of sin; but there is no sense of sin without some awareness of God. It is the strength of this which ultimately determines the matter. God as He exists among us comes closer to some than to others. But now the Creator knows and has determined from all eternity whom He shall draw near to in the world.

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## CONCLUSION.

The end of the whole matter as far as we are concerned is that God is, and He is the rewarder of them who diligently seek after Him; but He creates us, too, and He determines who will seek after Him and whom He will aid in the search. He does no evil and commits no sin. Sin comes as the result of our partial view. It exists only in our world, and is simply our choice of what appears to us to be morally evil. God determines it by making us such that we do choose just that way. But this determination is not sinful in Him, because if we want to judge Him by our standard of morality we must say that His choice in this regard is not a choice of evil but of good, since He sees the whole and sees that this is a necessary part of it. But we do not see the whole. We do not choose it because we see that it plays a good part in the total scheme of things. We choose it because we have come to look upon what we feel to be morally evil as our actual good. And this, and this alone, is sin.

The Calvinist must simply say that things are as they are ultimately because God has willed them to be so; <sup>and</sup> because God has willed them to be so, they are good. But it is the whole that is good, and every part only as it is related to the whole. Sin exists in the world because we see things darkly and only in part. It really exists in the world; but from the standpoint of the Creator its existence is good in its relation to

## CONCLUSION.

the whole. It may be that its existence is good simply as something to be overcome by God Himself as He exists amongst us, and as something which in its overcoming makes possible a completer fellowship between the Father and those redeemed from its power by the blood of the Son.

If from our standpoint the whole play is for some of us merely a tragedy, then we can only say that from the standpoint of the Creator an element of tragedy is good. Yet the truth remains: God has made no man to desire eternal fellowship with Him above all things else and then deprived him of it; those who are deprived of it He has made such that they did not desire it so. In the end all get what they have wanted most. The tragedy of it is that a man as such appears to have capacities of desire above those of the lower animals. But if he actually ceases to have, the tragedy itself may only be an appearance. The trouble is that we are shut up to a world of appearance, a dream world, a little play, -the only reality we shall ever know; but not ultimate reality.

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